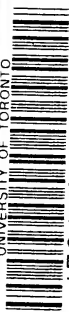


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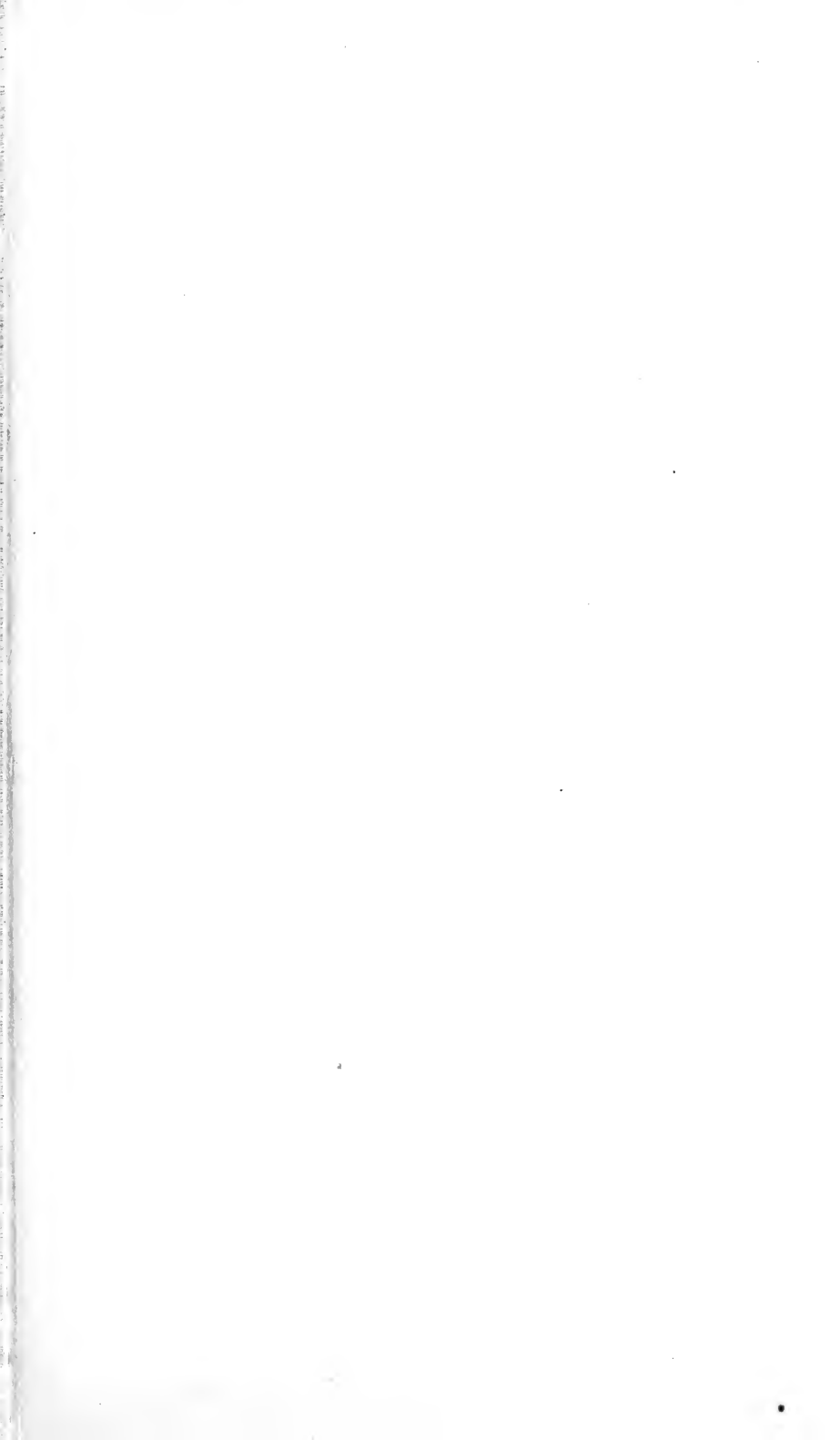
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THE LETTERS OF HENRY JAMES

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Portrait by R. B. Fiske

*Henry James.*  
*1912.*



THE LETTERS  
OF  
HENRY JAMES

SELECTED AND EDITED BY  
PERCY LUBBOCK

VOLUME II

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## CONTENTS

VI. RYE : 1904-1909— <i>continued</i>	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	1
LETTERS :	
To W. D. Howells . . . . .	8
To Edward Lee Childe . . . . .	10
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	12
To Mrs. Julian Sturgis . . . . .	14
To J. B. Pinker . . . . .	15
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	16
To Mrs. W. K. Clifford . . . . .	18
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	19
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	22
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	24
To Mrs. W. K. Clifford . . . . .	29
To Edward Warren . . . . .	31
To Mrs. William James . . . . .	33
To William James . . . . .	35
To Miss Margaret James . . . . .	37
To H. G. Wells . . . . .	38
To William James . . . . .	43
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	46
To Paul Harvey . . . . .	48
To William James . . . . .	51
To William James . . . . .	53
To Miss Margaret James . . . . .	54
To Mrs. Dew-Smith . . . . .	56
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	57
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	59
To Thomas Sergeant Perry . . . . .	62

VI. RYE: 1904-1909—*continued*

## LETTERS:

	PAGE
To Gaillard T. Lapsley . . . . .	64
To Bruce Porter . . . . .	66
To Miss Grace Norton . . . . .	68
To William James, junior . . . . .	72
To Howard Sturgis . . . . .	74
To Howard Sturgis . . . . .	76
To Madame Wagnière . . . . .	78
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	80
To Miss Gwennlian Palgrave . . . . .	83
To William James . . . . .	84
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	86
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	90
To Dr. and Mrs. J. William White . . . . .	91
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	93
To Gaillard T. Lapsley . . . . .	95
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	97
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	98
To W. D. Howells . . . . .	101
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	107
To J. B. Pinker . . . . .	108
To Miss Ellen Emmet . . . . .	110
To George Abbot James . . . . .	114
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	115
To George Abbot James . . . . .	116
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	118
To Mrs. Henry White . . . . .	120
To W. D. Howells . . . . .	122
To Edward Lee Childe . . . . .	124
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	126
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	127
To Arthur Christopher Benson . . . . .	129
To Charles Sayle . . . . .	131
To Mrs. W. K. Clifford . . . . .	133
To Miss Grace Norton . . . . .	135
To William James . . . . .	139
To H. G. Wells . . . . .	142
To Miss Henrietta Reubell . . . . .	144
To William James . . . . .	145

# CONTENTS

vii

## VI. RYE: 1904-1909—*continued*

LETTERS :	PAGE
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	147
To Madame Wagnière . . . . .	149
To Thomas Sergeant Perry . . . . .	151
To Owen Wister . . . . .	153

## VII. RYE AND CHELSEA: 1910-1914

PREFACE . . . . .	156
-------------------	-----

### LETTERS :

To T. Bailey Saunders . . . . .	161
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	162
To Miss Jessie Allen . . . . .	164
To Mrs. Bigelow . . . . .	166
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	167
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	168
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	170
To Bruce Porter . . . . .	171
To Miss Grace Norton . . . . .	172
To Thomas Sergeant Perry . . . . .	174
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	175
To Mrs. Charles Hunter . . . . .	176
To Mrs. W. K. Clifford . . . . .	178
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	180
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	182
To Miss Rhoda Broughton . . . . .	185
To H. G. Wells . . . . .	187
To C. E. Wheeler . . . . .	190
To Dr. J. William White . . . . .	191
To T. Bailey Saunders . . . . .	194
To Sir T. H. Warren . . . . .	195
To Miss Ellen Emmet . . . . .	196
To Howard Sturgis . . . . .	199
To Mrs. William James . . . . .	201
To Mrs. John L. Gardner . . . . .	203
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	205
To Mrs. Wilfred Sheridan . . . . .	206
To Miss Alice Runnells . . . . .	208
To Mrs. Frederic Harrison . . . . .	210

VII. RYE AND CHELSEA: 1910-1914—*continued*

## LETTERS:

	PAGE
To Miss Theodora Bosanquet . . . . .	212
To Mrs. William James . . . . .	213
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	215
To W. E. Norris . . . . .	218
To Miss M. Betham Edwards . . . . .	221
To Wilfred Sheridan . . . . .	223
To Walter V. R. Berry . . . . .	225
To W. D. Howells . . . . .	229
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	235
To H. G. Wells . . . . .	237
To Lady Bell . . . . .	239
To Mrs. W. K. Clifford . . . . .	243
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	245
To Miss Rhoda Broughton . . . . .	247
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	248
To R. W. Chapman . . . . .	250
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	252
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	255
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	257
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	259
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	261
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	264
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	266
To H. G. Wells . . . . .	270
To Mrs. Humphry Ward . . . . .	273
To Mrs. Humphry Ward . . . . .	275
To Gaillard T. Lapsley . . . . .	277
To John Bailey . . . . .	279
To Dr. J. William White . . . . .	282
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	284
To Mrs. Bigelow . . . . .	288
To Robert C. Witt . . . . .	291
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	292
To A. F. de Navarro . . . . .	297
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	299
To Miss Grace Norton . . . . .	304
To Mrs. Henry White . . . . .	307
To Mrs. William James . . . . .	310

# CONTENTS

ix

## VII. RYE AND CHELSEA: 1910-1914—*continued*

### LETTERS:

	PAGE
To Bruce Porter . . . . .	313
To Lady Ritchie . . . . .	315
To Mrs. William James . . . . .	316
To Percy Lubbock . . . . .	321
To Two Hundred and Seventy Friends . . . . .	322
To Mrs. G. W. Prothero . . . . .	324
To William James, junior . . . . .	326
To Miss Rhoda Broughton . . . . .	329
To Mrs. Alfred Sutro . . . . .	331
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	333
To Mrs. Archibald Grove . . . . .	336
To William Roughead . . . . .	339
To Mrs. William James . . . . .	341
To Howard Sturgis . . . . .	342
To Mrs. G. W. Prothero . . . . .	344
To H. G. Wells . . . . .	345
To Logan Pearsall Smith . . . . .	349
To C. Hagberg Wright . . . . .	351
To Robert Bridges . . . . .	353
To André Raffalovich . . . . .	355
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	357
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	361
To Bruce L. Richmond . . . . .	362
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	365
To Compton Mackenzie . . . . .	366
To William Roughead . . . . .	369
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	370
To Dr. J. William White . . . . .	371
To Henry Adams . . . . .	373
To Mrs. William James . . . . .	374
To Arthur Christopher Benson . . . . .	377
To Mrs. Humphry Ward . . . . .	379
To Thomas Sergeant Perry . . . . .	380
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	382
To William Roughead . . . . .	384
To William Roughead . . . . .	386
To Mrs. Alfred Sutro . . . . .	388
To Sir Claude Phillips . . . . .	389

## VIII. THE WAR : 1914-1916

PAGE

PREFACE . . . . . 393

## LETTERS :

To Howard Sturgis . . . . .	396
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	399
To Mrs. Alfred Sutro . . . . .	401
To Miss Rhoda Broughton . . . . .	403
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	405
To Mrs. W. K. Clifford . . . . .	407
To William James, junior . . . . .	409
To Mrs. W. K. Clifford . . . . .	412
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	414
To Mrs. R. W. Gilder . . . . .	416
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	419
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	420
To Mrs. T. S. Perry . . . . .	422
To Miss Rhoda Broughton . . . . .	423
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	425
To Miss Grace Norton . . . . .	427
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	429
To Thomas Sergeant Perry . . . . .	432
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	435
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	439
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	441
To Mrs. T. S. Perry . . . . .	443
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	446
To Miss Grace Norton . . . . .	447
To Mrs. Dacre Vincent . . . . .	450
To the Hon. Evan Charteris . . . . .	452
To Compton Mackenzie . . . . .	454
To Miss Elizabeth Norton . . . . .	457
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	460
To Mrs. Henry Cabot Lodge . . . . .	463
To Mrs. William James . . . . .	465
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	468
To the Hon. Evan Charteris . . . . .	470
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	472
To Thomas Sergeant Perry . . . . .	476
To Edward Marsh . . . . .	479

## CONTENTS

xi

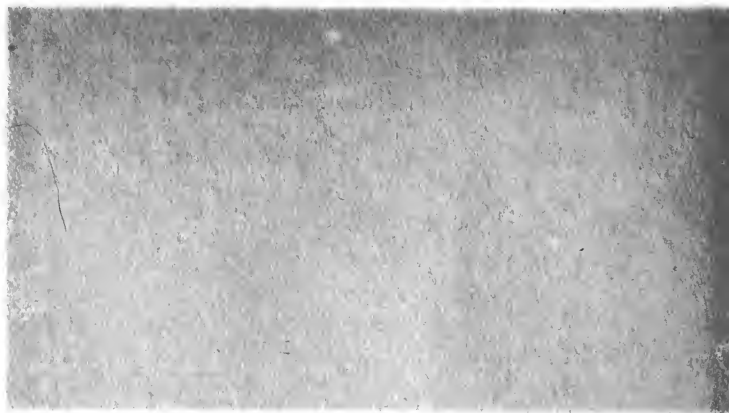
### VIII. THE WAR: 1914-1916—*continued*

#### LETTERS :

	PAGE
To Edward Marsh . . . . .	481
To Mrs. Wharton . . . . .	482
To Edward Marsh . . . . .	485
To G. W. Prothero . . . . .	486
To Wilfred Sheridan . . . . .	487
To Edward Marsh . . . . .	489
To Edward Marsh . . . . .	491
To Compton Mackenzie . . . . .	492
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	494
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	497
To J. B. Pinker . . . . .	499
To Frederic Harrison . . . . .	501
To H. G. Wells . . . . .	503
To H. G. Wells . . . . .	505
To Henry James, junior . . . . .	508
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	509
To John S. Sargent . . . . .	510
To Wilfred Sheridan . . . . .	511
To Edmund Gosse . . . . .	514
To Mrs. Wilfred Sheridan . . . . .	517
To Hugh Walpole . . . . .	519
INDEX . . . . .	521

## ILLUSTRATIONS

HENRY JAMES, FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY E. O. HOPPÉ - - - - -	<i>Frontispiece</i>
PAGE OF "THE AMERICAN" (ORIGINAL VERSION) AS REVISED BY HENRY JAMES, 1906 - - - - -	<i>to face page 72</i>





In order to facilitate other Subscribers getting this Book without undue delay, it is respectfully requested that it may be returned to the Library as soon as read.

RYE (*continued*)

(1904-1909)

The much-debated visit to America took place at last in 1904, and in ten very full months Henry James secured that renewed saturation in American experience which he desired before it should be too late for his advantage. He saw far more of his country in these months than he had ever seen in old days. He went with the definite purpose of writing a book of impressions, and these were to be principally the impressions of a "restored absentee," reviving the sunken and overlaid memories of his youth. But his memories were practically of New York, Newport and Boston only; to the country beyond he came for the most part as a complete stranger; and his voyage of new discovery proved of an interest as great as that which he found in revisiting ancient haunts. The American Scene, rather than the letters he was able to write in the midst of such a stir of movement, gives his account of the adventure. On the spot the daily assault of sensation, besetting him wherever he turned, was too insistent for deliberate report; he quickly saw that his book would have to be postponed for calmer hours at home; and his letters are those of a man almost over-

whelmed by the amount that is being thrown upon his power of absorption. But the book he eventually wrote shews how fully that power was equal to it all—losing or wasting none of it, meeting and reacting to every moment. Ten months of America poured into his imagination, as he intended they should, a vast mass of strange material—the familiar part of it now after so many years the strangest of all, perhaps; and his imagination worked upon it in one unbroken rage of interest. He was now more than sixty years old, but for such adventures of perception and discrimination his strength was greater than ever.

He sailed from England at the end of August, 1904, and spent most of the autumn with William James and his family, first at Chocorua, their country-home in the mountains of New Hampshire, and then at Cambridge. The rule he had made in advance against the paying of other visits was abandoned at once; he was in the centre of too many friendships and too many opportunities for extending and enlarging them. With Cambridge still as his headquarters he widely improved his knowledge of New England, which had never reached far into the countryside. At Christmas he was in New York—the place that was much more his home, as he still felt, than Boston had ever become, yet of all his American past the most unrecognisable relic in the portentous changes of twenty years. He struck south, through Philadelphia and Washington, in the hope of meeting the early Virginian spring; but it happened to be a year of unusually late snows, and his impressions of the southern country, most of which was quite unknown to him, were unfortunately marred. He found the right sub-tropical benignity in Florida, but a particular series of engagements brought him back after a

brief stay. It had been natural that he should be invited to celebrate his return to America by lecturing in public ; but that he should do so, and even with enjoyment, was more surprising, and particularly so to himself. He began by delivering a discourse on "The Lesson of Balzac"—a closely wrought critical study, very attractive in form and tone—at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, and was immediately solicited to repeat it elsewhere. He did this in the course of the winter at various other places, so providing himself at once with the means and the occasion for much more travel and observation than he had expected. By Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis he reached California in April, 1905. "The Lesson of Balzac" was given several times, until for a second visit to Bryn Mawr he wrote another paper, "The Question of our Speech"—an amusing and forcible appeal for care in the treatment of spoken English. The two lectures were afterwards published in America, but have not appeared in England.

The beauty and amenity of California was an unexpected revelation to him, and it is clear that his experience of the west, though it only lasted for a few weeks, was fully as fruitful as all that had gone before. Unluckily he did not write the continuation of *The American Scene*, which was to have carried the record on from Florida to the Pacific coast ; so that this part of his journey is only to be followed in a few hurried letters of the time. He was soon back in the east, at New York and Cambridge again, beginning by now to feel that the cup of his sensations was all but as full as it would hold. The longing to discharge it into prose before it had lost its freshness grew daily stronger ; a year's absence from his work had almost tired him out. But he paid several

last visits before sailing for home, and it was definitely in this American summer that he acquired a taste which was to bring him an immensity of pleasure on repeated occasions for the rest of his life. The use of the motor-car for wide and leisurely sweeps through summer scenery was from now onward an interest and a delight to which many friends were glad to help him—in New England at this time, later on at home, in France and in Italy. It renewed the romance of travel for him, revealing fresh aspects in the scenes of old wanderings, and he enjoyed the opportunity of sinking into the deep background of country life, which only came to him with emancipation from the railway.

He reached Lamb House again in August, 1905, and immediately set to work on his American book. It grew at such a rate that he presently found he had filled a large volume without nearly exhausting his material; but by that time the whole experience seemed remote and faint, and he felt it impossible to go further with it. The wreckage of San Francisco, moreover, by the great earthquake and fire of 1906, drove his own Californian recollections still further from his mind. He left *The American Scene* a fragment, therefore, and turned to another occupation which engaged him very closely for the next two years. This was the preparation of the revised and collected edition of his works, or at least of so much of his fiction as he could find room for in a limited number of volumes. To read his own books was an entirely new amusement to him; they had always been rigidly thrust out of sight from the moment they were finished and done with; and he came back now to his early novels with a perfectly detached critical curiosity. He took each of them in hand and plunged into the

enormous toil, not indeed of modifying its substance in any way—where he was dissatisfied with the substance he rejected it altogether—but of bringing its surface, every syllable of its diction, to the level of his exigent taste. At the same time, in the prefaces to the various volumes, he wrote what became in the end a complete exposition of his theory of the art of fiction, intertwined with the memories of past labour that he found everywhere in the much-forgotten pages. It all represented a great expenditure of time and trouble, besides the postponement of new work; and there is no doubt that he was deeply disappointed by the half-hearted welcome that the edition met with after all, schooled as he was in such discouragements.

While he was on this work he scarcely stirred from Lamb House except for occasional interludes of a few weeks in London; and it was not until the spring of 1907 that he allowed himself a real holiday. He then went abroad for three months, beginning with a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Wharton in Paris and a motor-tour with them over a large part of western and southern France. With all his French experience, Paris of the Faubourg St. Germain and France of the remote country-roads were alike almost new to him, and the whole episode was matter of the finest sort for his imagination. From *The American* to *The Ambassadors* he had written scores of pages about Paris, but none more romantic than a paragraph or two of *The Velvet Glove*, in which he recorded an impression of this time—a sight of the quays and the Seine on a blue and silver April night. From Paris he passed on to his last visit, as it proved, to his beloved Italy. It was the tenth he had made since his settlement in England in 1876. Like every one else, perhaps, who has ever known

Rome in youth, he found Rome violated and vulgarised in his age, but here too the friendly "chariot of fire" helped him to a new range of discoveries at Subiaco, Monte Cassino, and in the Capuan plain. He spent a few days at a friend's house on the mountain-slope below Val-lombrosa, and a few more, the best of all, in Venice, at the ever-glorious Palazzo Barbaro. That was the end of Italy, but he was again in Paris for a short while in the following spring, 1908, motoring thither from Amiens with his hostess of the year before.

Meanwhile his return to continuous work on fiction, still ardently desired by him, had been further postponed by a recrudescence of his old theatrical ambitions, stimulated, no doubt, by the comparative failure of the laborious edition of his works. He had taken no active step himself, but certain advances had been made to him from the world of the theatre, and with a mixture of motives he responded so far as to revise and re-cast a couple of his earlier plays and to write a new one. The one-act "Covering End" (which had appeared in *The Two Magics*, disguised as a short story) became "The High Bid," in three acts; it was produced by Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Robertson at Edinburgh in March, 1908, and repeated by them in London in the following February, for a few afternoon performances at His Majesty's Theatre. "The Other House," a play dating from a dozen years back which also had seen the light only as a narrative, was taken in hand again with a view to its production by another company, and "The Outcry" was written for a third. The two latter schemes were not carried out in the end, chiefly on account of the troubled time of illness which fell on Henry James with the beginning of 1910 and which made it necessary for him

to lay aside all work for many months. But this new intrusion of the theatre into his life was happily a much less agitating incident than his earlier experience of the same sort; his expectations were now fewer and his composure was more securely based. The misfortune was that again a considerable space of time was lost to the novel—and in particular to the novel of American life that he had designed to be one of the results of his year of repatriation. The blissful hours of dictation in the garden-house at Rye were interrupted while he was at work on the plays; he found he could compass the concision of the play-form only by writing with his own hand, foregoing the temptation to expand and develop which came while he created aloud. But his keenest wish was to get back to the novel once more, and he was clearing the way to it at the end of 1909 when all his plans were overturned by a long and distressing illness. He never reached the American novel until four years later, and he did not live to finish it.

*To W. D. Howells.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
Jan. 8th, 1904.

My dear Howells,

I am infinitely beholden to you for two good letters, the second of which has come in to-day, following close on the heels of the first and greeting me most benevolently as I rise from the couch of solitary pain. Which means nothing worse than that I have been in bed with odious and inconvenient gout, and have but just tumbled out to deal, by this helpful machinery, with dreadful arrears of Christmas and New Year's correspondence. Not yet at my ease for writing, I thus inflict on you without apology this unwonted grace of legibility.

It warms my heart, verily, to hear from you in so encouraging and sustaining a sense—in fact makes me cast to the winds all timorous doubt of the energy of my intention. I know now more than ever how much I want to “go”—and also a good deal of why. Surely it will be a blessing to commune with you face to face, since it is such a comfort and a cheer to do so even across the wild winter sea. Will you kindly say to Harvey for me that I shall have much pleasure in talking with him here of the question of something serialistic in the North American, and will broach the matter of an “American” novel in *no* other way until I see



him. It comes home to me much, in truth, that, after my immensely long absence, I am not quite in a position to answer in advance for the quantity and quality, the exact form and colour, of my "reaction" in presence of the native phenomena. I only feel tolerably confident that a reaction of some sort there will be. What affects me as indispensable—or rather what I am conscious of as a great personal desire—is some such energy of direct *action* as will enable me to cross the country and see California, and also have a look at the South. (I am hungry for Material, whatever I may be moved to do with it; and, honestly, I think, there will not be an inch or an ounce of it unlikely to prove grist to my intellectual and "artistic" mill. You speak of one's possible "hates" and loves—that is aversions and tendernesses—in the dire confrontation; but I seem to feel, about myself, that I proceed but scantily, in these chill years, by those particular categories and rebounds; in short that, somehow, such fine primitive passions *lose* themselves for me in the act of contemplation, or at any rate in the act of reproduction.) However, you are much more passionate than I, and I will wait upon *your* words, and try and learn from you a little to be shocked and charmed in the right places. What mainly appals me is the idea of going a good many months without a quiet corner to do my daily stint; so much so in fact that this is quite unthinkable, and that I shall only have courage to advance by nursing the dream of a sky-parlour of some sort, in some cranny or crevice of the continent, in which my mornings shall remain my own, my little trickle of prose eventuate, and my distracted reason thereby maintain its seat. If some gifted creature only wanted to exchange with me for six or eight months and

“swap” its customary bower, over there, for dear little Lamb House here, a really delicious residence, the trick would be easily played. However, I see I must wait for all tricks. This is all, or almost all, to-day—all except to reassure you of the pleasure you give me by your remarks about the *Ambassadors* and cognate topics. The “International” is very presumably indeed, and in fact quite inevitably, what I am *chronically* booked for, so that truly, even, I feel it rather a pity, in view of your so benevolent colloquy with Harvey, that a longish thing I am just finishing should not be *disponible* for the N.A.R. niche; the niche that I like very much the best, for serialisation, of all possible niches. But “The Golden Bowl” isn’t, alas, so employable. . . . Fortunately, however, I still cling to the belief that there are as good fish in the sea—that is, *my* sea! . . . . You mention to me a domestic event—in Pilla’s life—which interests me scarce the less for my having taken it for granted. But I bless you all. Yours always,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edward Lee Childe.*

The name of this friend, an American long settled in France, has already occurred (vol. i. p. 50) in connection with H. J.’s early residence in Paris. Mr. Childe (who died in 1911) is known as the biographer of his uncle, General Robert E. Lee, Commander of the Confederate Forces in the American Civil War.

Lamb House, Rye.

January 19th, 1904.

My dear old Friend,

. . . You write in no high spirits—over our general *milieu* or moment; but high spirits are not the accompaniment of mature wisdom, and yours are doubtless as good as mine. Like yourself,

I put in long periods in the country, which on the whole (on this mild and rather picturesque south coast) I find, in my late afternoon of life, a good and salutary friend. And I haven't your solace of companionship—I dwell in singleness save for an occasional imported visitor—who is usually of a sex, however, not materially to mitigate my celibacy! I have a small—a very nice perch in London, to which I sometimes go—in a week or two, for instance, for two or three months. But I return hither, always, with zest—from the too many people and things and words and motions—into the peaceful possession of (as I grow older) my more and more precious home hours. I have a houseful of good books, and reading tends to take for me the place of experience—or rather to *become* itself (*pour qui sait lire*) experience concentrated. You will say this is a dull picture, but I cultivate dulness in a world grown too noisy. Besides, as an antidote to it, I have committed myself to going some time this year to America—my first expedition thither for 21 years. If I do go (and it is inevitable,) I shall stay six or eight months—and shall be probably much and variously impressed and interested. But I am already gloating over the sentiments with which I shall expatriate myself here.

You ask what is being published and “thought” here—to which I reply that England never was the land of ideas, and that it is now less so than ever. Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, in three big volumes, is formidable, but rich, and is very well done; a type of frank, exhaustive, intimate biography, such as has been often well produced here, but much less in France: partly, perhaps, because so much cannot be told about the lives—private lives—of the grands hommes there. Of course the book is largely a history of English

politics for the last 50 years—but very human and vivid. As for talk, I hear very little—none in this rusticity ; but if I pay a visit of three days, as I do occasionally, I become aware that the Free Traders and the Chamberlainites *s'entre-dévorent*. The question bristles, for me, with the rebarbative ; but my prejudices and dearest traditions are all on the side of the system that has “made England great”—and everything I am most in sympathy with in the country appears to be still on the side of it, notably the better—the best—sort of the *younger* men. Chamberlain hasn't in the least captured these. . . . But it's the midnight hour, and my fire, while I write, has gone out. I return again, most heartily, your salutation ; I send the friendliest greeting to Mrs. Lee Childe and to the dear old Perthuis, well remembered of me, and very tenderly, and I am, my dear Childe, your very faithful old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To W. E. Norris.*

Lamb House, Rye.

January 27th, 1904.

My dear Norris,

I have as usual a charming letter from you too long unanswered ; and my sense of this is the sharper as, in spite of your eccentric demonstration of your—that is of *our* disparities, or whatever (or at least of your lurid implication of them,) it all comes round, after all, to our having infinitely much in common. For I too am making arrangements to be “cremated,” and my mind keeps yours company in whatever pensive hovering yours may indulge in over the graceful operations at Woking. If you will only agree to postpone these, on your own part,

to the latest really convenient date, I would quite agree to testify to our union of friendship by availing myself of the same occasion (it might come cheaper for two!) and undergoing the process *with* you. I find I do desire, from the moment the question becomes a really practical one, to throw it as far into the future as possible. Save at the frequent moments when I desire to die very *soon*, almost immediately, I cling to life and propose to make it last. I blush for the frivolity, but there are still so many things I want to do! I give you more or less an illustration of this, I feel, when I tell you that I go up to town tomorrow, for eight or ten weeks, and that I believe I have made arrangements (or incurred the making of them by others) to meet Rhoda Broughton in the evening (*à peine arrivé*) at dinner. But I shall make in fact a shorter winter's end stay than usual, for I have really committed myself to what is for me a great adventure later in the year; I have *taken* my passage for the U.S. toward the end of August, and with that long absence ahead of me I shall have to sit tight in the interval. So I shall come back early in April, to begin to "pack," at least morally; and the moral preparation will (as well as the material) be the greater as it's definitely visible to me that I must, if possible, let this house for the six or nine months. . . .

But what a sprawling scrawl I have written you! And it's long past midnight. Good morning! Everything else I meant to say (though there isn't much) is crowded out.

Yours always and ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Julian Sturgis.*

Julian Sturgis, novelist and poet, a friend of H. J.'s by many ties, had died on the day this letter was written.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

April 13, 1904.

Dearest Mrs. Julian,

I ask myself how I can write to you and yet how I cannot, for my heart is full of the tenderest and most compassionate thought of you, and I can't but vainly say so. And I feel myself thinking *as* tenderly of him, and of the laceration of his consciousness of leaving you and his boys, of giving you up and ceasing to be for you what he so devotedly was. And that makes me pity him more than words can say—with the wretchedness of one's not having been able to contribute to help or save him. But there he is in his sacrifice—a beautiful, noble, stainless memory, without the shadow upon him, or the shadow of a shadow, of a single grossness or meanness or ugliness—the world's dust on the nature of thousands of men. Everything that was high and charming in him comes out as one holds on to him, and when I think of my friendship of so many years with him I see it all as fairness and felicity. And then I think of *your* admirable years and I find no words for your loss. I only desire to keep near you and remain more than ever yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To J. B. Pinker.*

Mr. Pinker was now acting, as he continued to do till the end, as H. J.'s literary agent. This letter refers to *The Golden Bowl*.

Lamb House, Rye.

May 20th, 1904.

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I will indeed let you have the whole of my MS. on the very first possible day, now not far off; but I have still, absolutely, to finish, and to finish right. . . . I have been working on the book with unremitting intensity the whole of every blessed morning since I began it, some thirteen months ago, and I am at present within but some twelve or fifteen thousand words of *Finis*. But I can work only in my own way—a deucedly good one, by the same token!—and am producing the best book, I seem to conceive, that I have ever done. I have really done it fast, for what it is, and for the way I do it—the way I seem condemned to; which is to *overtreat* my subject by developments and amplifications that have, in large part, eventually to be greatly compressed, but to the prior operation of which the thing afterwards owes what is most durable in its quality. I have written, in perfection, 200,000 words of the G.B.—with the rarest perfection!—and you can imagine how much of that, which has taken time, has had to come out. It is not, assuredly, an economical way of work in the short run, but it is, for me, in the long; and at any rate one can proceed but in one's own manner. My manner however is, at present, to be making every day—it is now a question of a very moderate number of days—a straight step nearer my last page, comparatively close at hand. You shall have it,

I repeat, with the very minimum further delay of which I am capable. I do not seem to know, by the way, *when* it is Methuen's desire that the volume shall appear—I mean after the postponements we have had. The best time for me, I think, especially in America, will be about next October, and I promise you the thing in distinct time for that. But you will say that I am "over-treating" this subject too! Believe me yours ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Henry James, junior.*

Lamb House, Rye.

July 26th, 1904.

Dearest H.

Your letter from Chocorua, received a day or two ago, has a rare charm and value for me, and in fact brings to my eyes tears of gratitude and appreciation! I can't tell you how I thank you for offering me your manly breast to hurl myself upon in the event of my alighting on the New York dock, four or five weeks hence, in abject and craven terror—which I foresee as a certainty; so that I accept without shame or scruple the beautiful and blessed offer of aid and comfort that you make me. I have it at heart to notify you that you will in all probability bitterly repent of your generosity, and that I shall be sure to become for you a dead-weight of the first water, the most awful burden, nuisance, parasite, pestilence and plaster that you have ever known. But this said, I prepare even now to *me cramponner* to you like grim death, trusting to you for everything and invoking you from moment to moment as my providence and saviour. I go on assuming that I shall get off from Southampton in the Kaiser Wilhelm II,



of the North German Lloyd line, on August 24th—the said ship being, I believe, a “five-day” boat, which usually gets in sometime on the Monday. Of course it will be a nuisance to you, my arriving in New York—if I do arrive; but that got itself perversely and fatefully settled some time ago, and has now to be accepted as of the essence. Since you ask me what my desire is likely to be, I haven’t a minute’s hesitation in speaking of it as a probable frantic yearning to get off to Chocorua, or at least to Boston and its neighbourhood, by the very first possible train, and it may be on the said Monday. I shall not have much heart for interposing other things, nor any patience for it to speak of, so long as I hang off from your mountain home; yet, at the same time, if the boat should get in late, and it were possible to catch the Connecticut train, I believe I could bend my spirit to go for a couple of days to the Emmets’, *on the condition that you can go with me*. So, and so only, could I think of doing it. Very kindly, therefore, let them know this, by wire or otherwise, in advance, and determine for me yourself whichever you think the best move. Grace Norton writes me from Kirkland Street that she expects me *there*, and Mrs. J. Gardner writes me from Brookline that *she* absolutely counts on me; in consequence of all of which I beseech you to hold on to me tight and put me through as much as possible like an express parcel, paying 50 cents and taking a brass check for me. I shall write you again next month, and meanwhile I’m delighted at the prospect of your being able to spend September in the mountain home. I have all along been counting on that as a matter of course, but now I see it was fatuous to do so—and yet rejoice but the more that this is in your power. . . . But good-night, dearest H.—

with many caresses all round, ever your affectionate

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. W. K. Clifford.*

Chocorua, N.H., U.S.A.

September 16th, 1904.

My dear, dear Lucy C. !

One's too dreadful—I receive your note and your wire of August 23rd, in far New England, under another sky and in *such* another world. I don't know by what deviltry I missed them at the *last*, save by that of the Reform being closed for cleaning and the use of the *Union* (other Club) fraught with other errors and delays. But the Wednesday a.m. at Waterloo was horrible for crowd and confusion (passengers for ship so in their *thousands*), and I can't be sorry you weren't in the crush (mainly of rich German-American Jews!) But that is ancient history, and the worst of this, now, here, is that, spent with letter-writing (my American postbag swollen to dreadfulness, more and more, and interviewers only kept at bay till I get to Boston and New York,) I can only make you to-night this incoherent signal, waiting till some less burdened hour to be more decent and more vivid. I came straight up here (where I have been just a fortnight,) and these New Hampshire mountains, forests, lakes, are of a beauty that I hadn't (from my 18th-20th years) dared to remember as so great. And such *golden* September weather—though already turning to what the leaf enclosed (picked but by reaching out of window) is a very poor specimen of. It is a pure bucolic and Arcadian, wildly informal and un-“frilled” life—but sweet to

me after long years—and with many such good old homely, farmy New England things to eat! Yet a she-interviewer pushed into it yesterday all the way from New York, 400 *miles*, and we ten miles from a station, on the mere *chance* of me, and I took pity and *your* advice, and surrendered to her more or less, on condition that I shouldn't have to read her stuff—and I *shan't*! So you see I am well *in*—and to-morrow I go to other places (one by one) and shall be in deeper. It's a vast, queer, wonderful country—too unspeakable as yet, and of which *this* is but a speck on the hem of the garment! Forgive this poverty of wearied pen to your good old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

The Mount,  
Lenox, Mass.

October 27th, 1904.

My dear Gosse,

The weeks have been many and crowded since I received, not very many days after my arrival, your incisive letter from the depths of the so different world (from this here;) but it's just because they have been so animated, peopled and pervaded, that they have rushed by like loud-puffing motor-cars, passing out of my sight before I could step back out of the dust and the noise long enough to dash you off such a response as I could fling after them to be carried to you. And during my first three or four here my postbag was enormously—appallingly—heavy: I almost turned tail and re-embarked at the sight of it. And then I wanted above all, before writing you, to make myself a notion of how, and where, and even *what*, I was. I have turned round now a good many times, though

still, for two months, only in this corner of a corner of a corner, that is round New England; and the postbag has, happily, shrunken a good bit (though with liabilities, I fear, of re-expanding,) and this exquisite Indian summer day sleeps upon these really admirable little Massachusetts mountains, lakes and woods, in a way that lulls my perpetual sense of precipitation. I have moved from my own fireside for long years so little (have been abroad, till now, but once, for ten years previous) that the mere quantity of movement remains something of a terror and a paralysis to me—though I am getting to brave it, and to like it, as the sense of adventure, of holiday and romance, and above all of the great so visible and observable world that stretches before one more and more, comes through and makes the tone of one's days and the counterpoise of one's homesickness. I am, at the back of my head and at the bottom of my heart, transcendently homesick, and with a sustaining private reference, all the while (at every moment, verily,) to the fact that I have a tight anchorage, a definite little downward burrow, in the ancient world—a secret consciousness that I chink in my pocket as if it were a fortune in a handful of silver. But, with this, I have a most charming and interesting time, and [am] seeing, feeling, how agreeable it is, in the maturity of age, to revisit the long neglected and long unseen land of one's birth—especially when that land affects one as such a living and breathing and feeling and moving great monster as this one is. It is all very interesting and quite unexpectedly and almost uncannily delightful and sympathetic—partly, or largely, from my intense impression (all this glorious golden autumn, with weather like tinkling crystal and colours like molten jewels) of

the sweetness of the country itself, this New England rural vastness, which is all that I've seen. I've been only in the country—shamelessly visiting and almost only old friends and scattered relations—but have found it far more beautiful and amiable than I had ever dreamed, or than I ventured to remember. I had seen too little, in fact, of old, *to* have anything, to speak of, to remember—so that seeing so many charming things for the first time I quite thrill with the romance of elderly and belated discovery. Of Boston I haven't even had a full day—of N.Y. but three hours, and I have seen nothing whatever, thank heaven, of the “littery” world. I have spent a few days at Cambridge, Mass., with my brother, and have been greatly struck with the way that in the last 25 years Harvard has come to mass so much larger and to have gathered about her such a swarm of distinguished specialists and such a big organization of learning. This impression is increased this year by the crowd of foreign experts of sorts (mainly philosophic etc.) who have been at the St. Louis congress and who appear to be turning up overwhelmingly under my brother's roof—but who will have vanished, I hope, when I go to spend the month of November with him—when I shall see something of the goodly Boston. The blot on my vision and the shadow on my path is that I have contracted to write a book of Notes—without which contraction I simply couldn't have come; and that the conditions of life, time, space, movement etc. (really to *see*, to get one's material,) are such as to threaten utterly to frustrate for me any prospect of simultaneous work—which is the rock on which I may split altogether—wherefore my alarm is great and my project much disconcerted; for I have as yet scarce dipped into the great Basin

at all. Only a large measure of Time can help me—to do anything as decent as I want: wherefore pray for me constantly; and all the more that if I can only arrive at a means of application (for I see, already, from here, my *Tone*) I shall do, verily, a lovely book. I am interested, up to my eyes—at least I think I am! But you will fear, at this rate, that I am trying the book on you already. I *may* have to return to England only as a saturated sponge and wring myself out there. I hope meanwhile that your own saturations, and Mrs. Nelly's, prosper, and that the Pyrenean, in particular, continued rich and ample. If you are having the easy part of your year now, I hope you are finding in it the lordliest, or rather the *unlordliest* leisure. . . . I commend you all to felicity and am, my dear Gosse, yours always,

HENRY JAMES.

*To W. E. Norris.*

Boston.

[Dec. 15, 1904.]

My dear Norris,

There is nothing to which I find my situation in this great country less favourable than to this order of communication; yet I greatly wish, 1st, to thank you for your beautiful letter of as long ago as Sept. 12th (from Malvern,) and 2nd, not to fail of having some decent word of greeting on your table for Xmas morning. The conditions of time and space, at this distance, are such as to make nice calculations difficult, and I shall probably be frustrated of the felicity of dropping on you by exactly the right post. But I send you my affectionate blessing and I aspire, at the most, to lurk modestly in the Heap. You were in exile (very elegant exile,

I rather judge) when you last wrote, but you will now, I take it, be breathing again bland Torquay (*bland*, not blond)—a process having, to my fancy, a certain analogy and consonance with that of quaffing bland Tokay. This is neither Tokay nor Torquay—this slightly arduous process, or adventure, of mine, though very nearly as expensive, on the whole, as both of those luxuries combined. I am just now amusing myself with bringing the expense up to the point of ruin by having come back to Boston, after an escape (temporary, to New York,) to conclude a terrible episode with the Dentist—which is turning out an abyss of torture and tedium. I am promised (and shall probably enjoy) prodigious results from it—but the experience, the whole business, has been so fundamental and complicated that anguish and dismay *only* attend it while it goes on—embellished at the most by an opportunity to admire the miracles of American expertness. These are truly a revelation and my tormentor a great artist, but he will have made a cruelly deep dark hole in my time (very precious for me here) and in my pocket—the latter of such a nature that I fear no patching of all my pockets to come will ever stop the leak. But meanwhile it has all made me feel quite domesticated, consciously assimilated to the system; I am losing the precious sense that everything is strange (which I began by hugging close,) and it is only when I know I am quite whiningly homesick *en dessous*, for L.H. and Pall Mall, that I remember I am but a creature of the surface. The surface, however, has its points; New York is appalling, fantastically charmless and elaborately dire; but Boston has quality and convenience, and now that one sees American life in the longer piece one profits by many of its ingenuities. The

winter, as yet, is radiant and bell-like (in its frosty clearness;) the diffusion of warmth, indoors, is a signal comfort, extraordinarily comfortable in the travelling, by day—I don't go in for nights; and a marvel the perfect organisation of the universal telephone (with interviews and contacts that begin in 2 minutes and settle all things in them;) a marvel, I call it, for a person who hates notewriting as I do—but an exquisite curse when it isn't an exquisite blessing. I expect to be free to return to N.Y., the formidable, in a few days—where I shall inevitably have to stay another month; after which I hope for sweeter things—Washington, which is amusing, and the South, and eventually California—with, probably, Mexico. But many things are indefinite—only I shall probably stay till the end of June. I suppose I am much interested—for the time passes inordinately fast. Also the country is *unlike* any other—to one's sensation of it; those of Europe, from State to State, seem to me less different from each other than they are all different from this—or rather this from them. But forgive a fatigued and obscure scrawl. I am really *done* and demoralized with my interminable surgical (for it comes to that) ordeal. Yet I wish you heartily all peace and plenty and am yours, my dear Norris, very constantly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

The Breakers Hotel,  
Palm Beach,  
Florida.

February 16th, 1905.

My dear Gosse,

I seem to myself to be (under the disadvantage of this extraordinary process of



“seeing” my native country) perpetually writing letters; and yet I blush with the consciousness of not having yet got round to *you* again—since the arrival of your so genial New Year’s greeting. I have been lately in constant, or at least in very frequent, motion, on this large comprehensive scale, and the right hours of *recueillement* and meditation, of private communication, in short, are very hard to seize. And when one does seize them, as you know, one is almost crushed by the sense of accumulated and congested matter. So I won’t attempt to remount the stream of time save the most sketchily in the world. It was from Lenox, Mass., I think, in the far-away prehistoric autumn, that I last wrote you. I reverted thence to Boston, or rather, mainly, to my brother’s kindly roof at Cambridge, hard by—where, alas, my five or six weeks were harrowed and ravaged by an appalling experience of American transcendent *Dentistry*—a deep dark abyss, a trap of anguish and expense, into which I sank unwarily (though, I now begin to see, to my great profit in the short human hereafter,) of which I have not yet touched the *fin fond*. (I mention it as accounting for treasures of wrecked *time*—I could do nothing else whatever in the state into which I was put, while the long ordeal went on: and this has left me belated as to everything—“work,” correspondence, impressions, progress through the land.) But I was (temporarily) liberated at last, and fled to New York, where I passed three or four appalled midwinter weeks (Dec. and early Jan. ;) appalled, mainly, I mean, by the ferocious discomfort this season of unprecedented snow and ice puts on in that altogether unspeakable city—from which I fled in turn to Philadelphia and Washington. (I am going back to N.Y. for three or four weeks of developed

spring—I haven't yet (in a manner) seen it or cowardly "done" it.) Things and places southward have been more manageable—save that I lately spent a week of all but polar rigour at the high-perched Biltmore, in North Carolina, the extraordinary colossal French château of George Vanderbilt in the said N.C. mountains—the house 2500 feet in air, and a thing of the high Rothschild manner, but of a size to contain two or three Mentmores and Waddesdons. . . . Philadelphia and Washington would yield me a wild range of anecdote for you were we face to face—will yield it me then; but I can only glance and pass—glance at the extraordinary and rather personally-fascinating President—who was kind to me, as was dear J. Hay even more, and wondrous, blooming, aspiring little Jusserand, all pleasant welcome and hospitality. But I liked poor dear queer flat comfortable Philadelphia almost ridiculously (for what it is—extraordinarily *cosse* and materially civilized,) and saw there a good deal of your friend—as I think she is—Agnes Repplier, whom I liked for her bravery and (almost) brilliancy. (You'll be glad to hear that she is extraordinarily better, up to now, these two years, of the malady by which her future appeared so compromised.) However, I am tracing my progress on a scale, and the hours melt away—and my letter mustn't grow out of my control. I have worked down here, yearningly, and for all too short a stay—but ten days in all; but Florida, at this southernmost tip, or almost, does beguile and gratify me—giving me my first and last (evidently) sense of the tropics, or *à peu près*, the subtropics, and revealing to me a blandness in nature of which I had no idea. This is an amazing winter-resort—the well-to-do in their tens, their hundreds, of thousands, from all over the land; the

property of a single enlightened despot, the creator of two monster hotels, the extraordinary agrément of which (I mean of course the high pitch of mere monster-hotel amenity) marks for me [how] the rate at which, the way *in* which, things are done over here changes and changes. When I remember the hotels of twenty-five years ago even! It will give me brilliant chapters on hotel-civilization. Alas, however, with perpetual movement and perpetual people and very few concrete objects of nature or art to make use of for assimilation, my brilliant chapters don't get themselves written—so little can they be notes of the current picturesque—like one's European notes. They can only be notes on a social order, of vast extent, and I see with a kind of despair that I shall be able to do here little more than get my saturation, soak my intellectual sponge—reserving the squeezing-out for the subsequent, ah, the so yearned-for peace of Lamb House. It's all interesting, but it isn't thrilling—though I gather everything is more really curious and vivid in the West—to which and California, and to Mexico if I can, I presently proceed. Cuba lies off here at but twelve hours of steamer—and I am heartbroken at not having time for a snuff of that flamboyant flower.

*Saint Augustine, Feb. 18th.*

I had to break off day before yesterday, and I have completed meanwhile, by having come thus far north, my sad sacrifice of an intenser exoticism. I am stopping for two or three days at the "oldest city in America"—two or three being none too much to sit in wonderment at the success with which it has outlived its age. The paucity of the signs of the same has perhaps almost the pathos the signs themselves would

have if there *were* any. There is rather a big and melancholy and "toned" (with a patina) old Spanish fort (of the 16th century,) but horrible little modernisms surround it. On the other hand this huge modern hotel (Ponce de Leon) is in the style of the Alhambra, and the principal church ("Presbyterian") in that of the mosque of Cordova. So there are compensations—and a tiny old Spanish cathedral front ("earliest church built in America"—late 16th century,) which appeals with a yellow ancientry. But I must pull off—simply sticking in a memento\* (of a public development, on my desperate part) which I have no time to explain. This refers to a past exploit, but the leap is taken, is being renewed; I repeat the horrid act at Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis, San Francisco, and later on in New York—*have* already done so at Philadelphia (always to "private" "literary" or Ladies' Clubs—at Philadelphia to a vast multitude, with Miss Repplier as brilliant introducer. At Bryn Mawr to 700 persons—by way of a *little* circle.) In fine I have waked up *conférencier*, and find, to my stupefaction, that I can do it. The fee is large, of course—otherwise! Indianapolis offers £100 for 50 minutes! It pays in short travelling expenses, and the incidental circumstances and phenomena are full of illustration. I can't do it *often*—but for £30 a time I should easily be able to. Only that would be death. If I could come back here to abide I think I should really be able to abide in (relative) affluence: one can, on the spot, make so much more money—or at least I might. But I would rather live a beggar at Lamb House—and it's to that I shall return. Let my biographer, however, recall the

\* Card of admission to a lecture by H. J. (The Lesson of Balzac), Bryn Mawr College, Jan. 19, 1905.

solid sacrifice I shall have made. I have just read over your New Year's eve letter and it makes me so homesick that the bribe itself will largely seem to have been on the side of the reversion—the bribe to one's finest sensibility. I have published a novel—"The Golden Bowl"—here (in two vols.) in advance (15 weeks ago) of the English issue—and the latter will be (I don't even know if it's out yet in London) in so comparatively mean and fine-printed a London form that I have no heart to direct a few gift copies to be addressed. I shall convey to you somehow the handsome New York page—don't read it till then. The thing has "done" much less ill here than anything I have ever produced.

But good-night, verily—with all love to all, and to Mrs. Nelly in particular.

Yours always,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. W. K. Clifford.*

Hotel Ponce de Leon,  
St. Augustine, Florida.  
February 21st, '05.

Dearest old Friend!

I am leaving this subtropical Floridian spot from one half hour to another, but the horror of not having for so long despatched a word to you, the shame and grief and contrition of it, are so strong, within me, that I simply seize the passing moment by the hair of its head and glare at it till it pauses long enough to let me—as it were—embrace you. Yet I feel, have felt, all along, that you will have *understood*, and that words are wasted in explaining the obvious. Letters, all these weeks and weeks, day to day and hour to hour letters, have fluttered about me in a dense crowd even

as the San Marco pigeons, in Venice, round him who appears to have corn to scatter. So the whole queer time has gone in my scattering corn—scattering and chattering, and being chattered and scattered *to*, and moving from place to place, and surrendering to people (the *only* thing to do here—since things, apart from people, are *nil*;) in *staying* with them, literally, from place to place and week to week (though with old friends, as it were, alone—that is mostly, thank God—to avoid new obligations :) doing that as the only solution of the problem of “seeing” the country. I *am* seeing, very well—but the weariness of so much of so prolonged and sustained a process is, at times, surpassing. It would be a strain, a weariness (kept up so,) *anywhere*; and it is extraordinarily tiresome, on occasions, here. Vastness of space and distance, of number and quantity, is the element in which one lives: it is a great complication alone to be dealing with a country that has fifty principal cities—each a law unto itself—and unto *you*: England, poor old dear, having (to speak of) but one. On the other hand it is distinctly interesting—the business and the country, as a whole; there are no exquisite moments (save a few of a *funniness* that comes to that;) but there are none from which one doesn't *get* something. . . . And meanwhile I am *lecturing* a little to pay the Piper, as I go—for high fees (of course) and as yet but three or four times. But they give me gladly £50 for 50 minutes (a pound a minute—like Patti!)—and always for the same lecture (as yet :) *The Lesson of Balzac*. I do it beautifully—feel as if I had discovered my vocation—at any rate amaze myself. It is *well*—for without it I don't see how I could have held out.

. . . This winter has been a hideous succession

of huge snow-blizzards, blinding polar waves, and these southernmost places, even, are not their usual soft selves. Yet the very south tiptoe of Florida, from which I came three days ago, has an air as of molten liquid velvet, and the palm and the orange, the pine-apple, the scarlet hibiscus, the vast magnolia and the sapphire sea, make it a vision of very considerable beguilement. I *wanted* to put over to Cuba—but one night from this coast; but it was, for reasons, not to be done—reasons of time and money. I *shall* try for Mexico—and meanwhile pray for me hard. My visit is doing—*has* done—my little reputation here, save the mark, great good. *The Golden Bowl* is in its *fourth* edition—unprecedented! You see I “answer” your last newses and things not at all—not even the note of anxiety about T. Such are these cruelties, these ferocities of separation. But I drink in everything you tell me, and I cherish you all always and am yours and the children’s twain ever so constantly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edward Warren.*

University Club,  
Chicago.  
March 19th, 1905.

Dearest Edward,

This is but a mere breathless blessing hurled at you, as it were, between trains and in ever so grateful joy in your brave double letter (of the lame hand, hero that you are!) which has just overtaken me here. I’m not pretending to write—I can’t; it’s impossible amid the movement and obsession and complication of all this overwhelming *muchness* of space and distance and time (consumed,) and above

all of people (consuming.) I start in a few hours straight for California—enter my train this, Monday, night 7.30, and reach Los Angeles and Pasadena at 2.30 Thursday afternoon. The train has, I believe, barber's shops, bathrooms, stenographers and typists; so that if I can add a postscript, without too much joggle, I will. But you will say "*Here* is joggle enough," for alack, I am already (after 17 days of the "great Middle West") rather spent and weary, weary of motion and chatter, and oh, of such an unimagined dreariness of *ugliness* (on many, on most sides!) and of the perpetual effort of trying to "do justice" to what one doesn't like. If one could only damn it and have done with it! So much of it is rank with good intentions. And then the "kindness"—the princely (as it were) hospitality of these clubs; besides the sense of *power*, huge and augmenting power (vast mechanical, industrial, social, financial) everywhere! This Chicago is huge, *infinite* (of potential size and form, and even of actual;) black, smoky, *old-looking*, very like some preternaturally *boomed* Manchester or Glasgow lying beside a colossal lake (Michigan) of hard pale green jade, and putting forth railway antennae of maddening complexity and gigantic length. Yet this club (which looks old and sober too!) is an abode of peace, a benediction to me in the looming largeness; I *live* here, and they put one up (always, everywhere,) with one's so excellent room with perfect bathroom and w.c. of its own, appurtenant (the *universal* joy of this country, in private houses or wherever; a feature that is really almost a consolation for many things.) I have been to the south, the far end of Florida &c—but prefer the far end of Sussex! In the heart of golden orange-groves I yearned for the shade of the old L.H. mulberry tree. So



you see I am loyal, and I sail for Liverpool on July 4th. I go up the whole Pacific coast to Vancouver, and return to New York (am due there April 26th) by the Canadian-Pacific railway (said to be, in its first half, sublime.) But I scribble beyond my time. Your letters are really a blessed breath of brave old Britain. But oh for a talk in a Westminster panelled parlour, or a walk on far-shining Camber sands! All love to Margaret and the younglings. I have again written to Jonathan—he will have more news of me for you. Yours, dearest Edward, almost in nostalgic *rage*, and at any rate in constant affection,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. William James.*

Hotel del Coronado,  
Coronado Beach, California.  
Wednesday night,  
April 5th, 1905.

Dearest Alice,

I must write you again before I leave this place (which I do tomorrow noon;) if only to still a little the unrest of my having condemned myself, all too awkwardly, to be so long without hearing from you. I haven't all this while—that is these several days—had the letters which I am believing you will have forwarded to Monterey sent down to me here. This I have abstained from mainly because, having stopped over here these eight or nine days to write, in extreme urgency, an article, and wishing to finish it at any price, I have felt that I should go to pieces as an author if a mass of arrears of postal matter should come tumbling in upon me—and particularly if any of it should be troublous. However, I devoutly hope none of it

has been troublous—and I have done my best to let you know (in any need of wiring etc.) where I have been. Also the letterless state has added itself to the deliciously simplified social state to make me taste the charming sweetness and comfort of this spot. California, on these terms, when all is said (Southern C. at least—which, however, the real C., I believe, much repudiates,) has completely bowled me over—such a delicious difference from the rest of the U.S. do I find in it. (I speak of course all of nature and climate, fruits and flowers; for there is absolutely nothing else, and the sense of the shining social and human inane is utter.) The days have been mostly here of heavenly beauty, and the flowers, the wild flowers just now in particular, which fairly *rage*, with radiance, over the land, are worthy of some purer planet than this. I live on oranges and olives, fresh from the tree, and I lie awake nights to listen, on purpose, to the languid list of the Pacific, which my windows overhang. I wish poor heroic Harry could be here—the thought of whose privations, while I wallow unworthy, makes me (tell him with all my love) miserably sick and poisons much of my profit. I go back to Los Angeles to-morrow, to (as I wrote you last) re-utter my (now loathly) Lecture to a female culture club of 900 members (whom I make pay me through the nose,) and on Saturday p.m. 8th, I shall be at Monterey (Hotel del Monte.) But my stay there is now condemned to bitterest brevity and my margin of time for all the rest of this job is so rapidly shrinking that I see myself *brûlant mes étapes*, alas, without exception, and cutting down my famous visit to Seattle to a couple of days. It breaks my heart to have so stinted myself here—but it was inevitable, and no one had given me the

least inkling that I should find California so sympathetic. It is strange and inconvenient, how little impression of anything any one ever takes the trouble to give one beforehand. I should like to stay here all April and May. But I am writing more than my time permits—my article is still to finish. I ask you no questions—you will have told me everything. I live in the hope that the news from Wm. will have been good. At least at Monterey, may there be some. . . . But good night—with great and distributed tenderness. Yours, dearest Alice, always and ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William James.*

*Dictated.*

95 Irving Street,  
Cambridge, Mass.  
July 2nd, 1905.

Dearest W.,

I am ticking this out at you for reasons of convenience that will be even greater for yourself, I think, than for me. . . . Your good letter of farewell reached me at Lenox, from which I returned but last evening—to learn, however, from A., every circumstance of your departure and of your condition, as known up to date. The grim grey Chicago will now be your daily medium, but will put forth for you, I trust, every such flower of amenity as it is capable of growing. May you not regret, at any point, having gone so far to meet its queer appetites. Alice tells me that you are to go almost straight thence (though with a little interval here, as I sympathetically understand) to the Adirondacks: where I hope for you as big a bath of impersonal Nature as possible, with the

tub as little tainted, that is, by the soapsuds of *personal*: in other words, all the "board" you need, but no boarders. I seem greatly to dislike, not to say deeply to mistrust, the Adirondack boarder . . . I greatly enjoyed the whole Lenox countryside, seeing it as I did by the aid of the Whartons' big strong commodious new motor, which has fairly converted me to the sense of all the thing may do for one and one may get from it. The potent way it deals with a country large enough for it not to *rudoyer*, but to rope in, in big free hauls, a huge netful of impressions at once—this came home to me beautifully, convincing me that if I were rich I shouldn't hesitate to take up with it. A great transformer of life and of the future! All that country charmed me; we spent the night at Ashfield and motored back the next day, after a morning there, by an easy circuit of 80 miles between luncheon and a late dinner; a circuit easily and comfortably prolonged for the sake of good roads. . . . But I mustn't rattle on. I have still innumerable last things to do. But the portents are all propitious—*absit* any ill consequence of this fatuity! I am living, at Alice's instance, mainly on huge watermelon, dug out in spadefuls, yet light to carry. But good bye now. Your last hints for the "Speech" are much to the point, and I will try even thus late to stick them in. May every comfort attend you!

Ever yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Margaret James.*

The project of a book on London was never carried further, though certain pages of the autobiographical fragment, *The Middle Years*, written in 1914-15, no doubt shew the kind of line it would have taken.

Lamb House, Rye.

November 3rd, 1905.

Dearest Peg,

. . . In writing to your father (which, however, I shall not be able to do by this same post) I will tell him a little better what has been happening to me and why I have been so unsociable. This unsociability is in truth all that has been happening—as it has been the reverse of the medal, so to speak, of the great arrears and urgent applications (to work) that awaited me here after I parted with you. I have been working in one way and another with great assiduity, squeezing out my American Book with all desirable deliberation, and yet in a kind of panting dread of the matter of it all melting and fading from me before I have worked it off. It does melt and fade, over here, in the strangest way—and yet I did, I think, while with you, so successfully cultivate the impression and the saturation that even my bare residuum won't be quite a vain thing. I really find in fact that I have more impressions than I know what to do with; so that, evidently, at the rate I am going, I shall have pegged out two distinct volumes instead of one. I have already produced almost the substance of one—which I have been sending to "Harper" and the N.A.R., as per contract; though publication doesn't begin, apparently, in those periodicals till next month. And then (please mention to your Dad) all the time I haven't been doing the American Book, I have been revising with

extreme minuteness three or four of my early works for the Edition Définitive (the settlement of some of the details of which seems to be hanging fire a little between my "agent" and my New York publishers; not, however, in a manner to indicate, I think, a real hitch.) Please, however, say nothing whatever, any of you to any one, about the existence of any such plan. These things should be spoken of only when they are in full feather. That for your Dad—I mean the information as well as the warning, in particular; on whom, you see, I am shamelessly working off, after all, a good deal of my letter. Mention to him also that still other tracts of my time, these last silent weeks, have gone, have *had* to go, toward preparing for a job that I think I mentioned to him while with you—my pledge, already a couple of years old, to do a romantical-psychological-pictorial "social" *London* (of the general form, length, pitch, and "type" of Marion Crawford's *Ave Roma Immortalis*) for the Macmillans; and I have been feeling so nervous of late about the way America has crowded me off it, that I have had, for assuagement of my nerves, to begin, with piety and prayer, some of the very considerable reading the task will require of me. All this to show you that I haven't been wantonly uncommunicative. But good-night, dear Peg; I am going to do another for Aleck. With copious embraces,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To H. G. Wells.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
November 19th, 1905.

My dear Wells,

If I take up time and space with telling you why I have not *sooner* written to

thank you for your magnificent bounty, I shall have, properly, to steal it from my letter, my letter itself; a much more important matter. And yet I *must* say, in three words, that my course has been inevitable and natural. I found your first munificence here on returning from upwards of 11 months in America, toward the end of July—returning to the mountain of arrears produced by almost a year's absence and (superficially, thereby) a year's idleness. I recognized, even from afar (I had already done so) that the Utopia was a book I should desire to read only in the right conditions of *coming* to it, coming with luxurious freedom of mind, rapt surrender of attention, adequate honours, for it of every sort. So, not bolting it like the morning paper and sundry, many, other vulgarly importunate things, and knowing, moreover, I had already shown you that though I was slow I was safe, and even certain, I "came to it" only a short time since, and surrendered myself to it absolutely. And it was while I was at the bottom of the crystal well that Kipps suddenly appeared, thrusting his honest and inimitable head over the edge and calling down to me, with his note of wondrous truth, that he had business with me above. I took my time, however, there below (though "below" be a most improper figure for your sublime and vertiginous heights,) and achieved a complete saturation; after which, reascending and making out things again, little by little, in the dingy air of the actual, I found Kipps, in his place, awaiting me—and from his so different but still so utterly coercive embrace I have just emerged. It was really very well he was there, for I found (and it's even a little strange) that I could read *you* only—*after you*—and don't at all see whom else I could have read. But now that this is so I

don't see either, my dear Wells, how I can "write" you about these things—they make me want so infernally to talk with you, to see you at length. Let me tell you, however, simply, that they have left me prostrate with admiration, and that you are, for me, more than ever, the most interesting "literary man" of your generation—in fact, the only interesting one. These things do you, to my sense, the highest honour, and I am lost in amazement at the diversity of your genius. As in everything you do (and especially in these three last Social imaginations), it is the quality of your intellect that primarily (in the Utopia) obsesses me and reduces me—to that degree that even the colossal dimensions of your Cheek (pardon the term that I don't in the least invidiously apply) fails to break the spell. Indeed your Cheek is positively the very sign and stamp of your genius, valuable to-day, as you possess it, beyond any other instrument or vehicle, so that when I say it doesn't break the charm, I probably mean that it largely constitutes it, or constitutes the force: which is the force of an irony that no one else among us begins to have—so that we are starving, in our enormities and fatuities, for a sacred satirist (the satirist *with* irony—as poor dear old Thackeray was the satirist without it,) and you come, admirably, to save us. There are too many things to say—which is so exactly why I can't write. Cheeky, cheeky, cheeky is *any* young-man-at-Sandgate's offered Plan for the life of Man—but so far from thinking that a disqualification of your book, I think it is positively what makes the performance heroic. I hold, with you, that it is only by our each contributing Utopias (the cheekier the better) that anything will come, and I think there is nothing in the book truer and happier than your speaking



of this struggle of the rare yearning individual toward that suggestion as one of the certain assistances of the future. Meantime you set a magnificent example—of *caring*, of feeling, of seeing, above all, and of suffering from, and with, the shockingly sick actuality of things. Your epilogue tag in italics strikes me as of the highest, of an irresistible and touching beauty. Bravo, bravo, my dear Wells!

And now, coming to Kipps, what am I to say about Kipps but that I am ready, that I am compelled, utterly to *drivel* about him? He is not so much a masterpiece as a mere born gem—you having, I know not how, taken a header straight down into mysterious depths of observation and knowledge, I know not which and where, and come up again with this rounded pearl of the diver. But of course you know yourself how immitigably the thing is done—it is of such a brilliancy of *true* truth. I really think that you have done, at this time of day, two particular things for the first time of their doing among us. (1) You have written the first closely and intimately, the first intelligently and consistently ironic or satiric novel. In everything else there has always been the sentimental or conventional interference, the interference of which Thackeray is full. (2) You have for the very first time treated the English “lower middle” class, etc., without the picturesque, the grotesque, the fantastic and romantic interference of which Dickens, e.g., is so misleadingly, of which even George Eliot is so deviatingly, full. You have handled its vulgarity in so scientific and historic a spirit, and seen the whole thing all in its *own* strong light. And then the book has throughout such extraordinary life; everyone in it, without exception, and every piece and part of it, is so vivid and

sharp and *raw*. Kipps himself is a diamond of the first water, from start to finish, exquisite and radiant; Coote is consummate, Chitterlow magnificent (the whole first evening with Chitterlow perhaps the most brilliant thing in the book—unless that glory be reserved for the way the entire matter of the *shop* is done, including the admirable image of the boss.) It all in fine, from cover to cover, does you the greatest honour, and if we had any other than skin-deep criticism (very stupid, too, at that,) it would have immense recognition.

I repeat that these things have made me want greatly to see you. Is it thinkable to you that you might come over at this ungenial season, for a night—some time before Xmas? Could you, would you? I should immensely rejoice in it. I am here till Jan. 31st—when I go up to London for three months. I go away, probably, for four or five days at Xmas—and I go away for next Saturday-Tuesday. But apart from those dates I would await you with rapture.

And let me say just one word of attenuation of my (only apparent) meanness over the *Golden Bowl*. I was in America when that work appeared, and it was published there in 2 vols. and in very charming and readable form, each vol. but moderately thick and with a legible, handsome, large-typed page. But there came over to me a copy of the London issue, fat, vile, small-typed, horrific, prohibitive, that so broke my heart that I vowed I wouldn't, for very shame, disseminate it, and I haven't, with that feeling, had a copy in the house or sent one to a single friend. I wish I had an American one at your disposition—but I have been again and again depleted of all ownership in respect to it. You are very welcome to the British brick if you, at this late day, will have it.

I greet Mrs Wells and the Third Party very cordially and am yours, my dear Wells, more than ever,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To William James.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
November 23rd, 1905.

Dearest William,

I wrote not many days since to Aleck, and not very, very many before to Peggy—but I can't, to-night, hideously further postpone acknowledging your so liberal letter of Oct. 22nd (the one in which you enclosed me Aleck's sweet one,) albeit I have been in the house all day without an outing, and very continuously writing, and it is now 11 p.m. and I am rather fagged. . . . However, I shall write to Alice for information—all the more that I deeply owe that dear eternal Heroine a letter. I am not "satisfied about her," please tell her with my tender love, and should have testified to this otherwise than by my long cold silence if only I hadn't been, for stress of composition, putting myself on very limited contribution to the post. The worst of these bad manners are now over, and please tell Alice that my very next letter shall be to her. Only *she* mustn't put pen to paper for me, not so much as dream of it, before she hears from me. I take a deep and rich and brooding comfort in the thought of how splendidly you are all "turning out" all the while—especially Harry and Bill, and especially Peg, and above all, Aleck—in addition to Alice and you. I turn you over (in my spiritual pocket,) collectively and individually, and make you chink and rattle and ring; getting from you the sense of a great, though too-much (for my use) tied-up fortune. I have great joy (tell him with my love) of the news of Bill's so

superior work, and yearn to have some sort of a squint at it. Tell him, at any rate, how I await him, for his holidays, out here—on this spot—and I wish I realized more richly Harry's present conditions. I await him here not less.

I mean (in response to what you write me of your having read the *Golden B.*) to try to produce some uncanny form of thing, in fiction, that will gratify you, as Brother—but let me say, dear William, that I shall greatly be humiliated if you *do* like it, and thereby lump it, in your affection, with things, of the current age, that I have heard you express admiration for and that I would sooner descend to a dishonoured grave than have written. Still I *will* write you your book, on that two-and-two-make-four system on which all the awful truck that surrounds us is produced, and *then* descend to my dishonoured grave—taking up the art of the slate pencil instead of, longer, the art of the brush (vide my lecture on Balzac.) But it is, seriously, too late at night, and I am too tired, for me to express myself on this question—beyond saying that I'm always sorry when I hear of your reading anything of mine, and always hope you won't—you seem to me so constitutionally unable to "enjoy" it, and so condemned to look at it from a point of view remotely alien to mine in writing it, and to the conditions out of which, *as* mine, it has inevitably sprung—so that all the intentions that have been its main reason for being (with *me*) appear never to have reached you at all—and you appear even to assume that the life, the elements forming its subject-matter, deviate from felicity in not having an impossible analogy with the life of Cambridge. I see nowhere about me done or dreamed of the things that alone for me constitute the *interest* of the doing of the novel—and yet it is in a

sacrifice of them on their very own ground that the thing you suggest to me evidently consists. It shows how far apart and to what different ends we have had to work out (very naturally and properly!) our respective intellectual lives. And yet I can read *you* with rapture—having three weeks ago spent three or four days with Manton Marble at Brighton and found in his hands ever so many of your recent papers and discourses, which, having margin of mornings in my room, through both breakfasting and lunching there (by the habit of the house,) I found time to read several of—with the effect of asking you, earnestly, to address me some of those that I so often, in Irving St., saw you address to others who were not your brother. I had no time to read them there. Philosophically, in short, I am “with” you, almost completely, and you ought to take account of this and get me over altogether.—There are two books by the way (one fictive) that I permit you to *raffoler* about as much as you like, for I have been doing so myself—H. G. Wells’s *Utopia* and his *Kipps*. The *Utopia* seems to me even more remarkable for other things than for his characteristic cheek, and *Kipps* is quite magnificent. Read them both if you haven’t—certainly read *Kipps*.—There’s also another subject I’m too full of not to mention the good thing I’ve done for myself—that is, for Lamb House and my garden—by moving the greenhouse away from the high old wall near the house (into the back garden, setting it up better—against the *street* wall) and thereby throwing the liberated space into the front garden to its immense apparent extension and beautification. . . .

But oh, fondly, good-night!

Ever your  
HENRY.

*To W. E. Norris.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
December 23rd, 1905.

My dear Norris,

It is my desire that this, which I shall post here to-morrow, shall be a tiny item in the hecatomb of friendship gracing your breakfast table on Christmas morning and mingling the smoke of (certain) aged and infirm victims with the finer and fresher fumes of the board. But the aged and infirm propose and the postman disposes and I can only hope I shall not be either disconcertingly previous or ineffectively subsequent. If my mind's eye loses you at sweet (yet sublime) Underbank, I still see you in a Devonshire mild light and feel your Torquay window letting in your Torquay air—which, at this distance, in this sadly Southeasternized corner, suggests all sorts of enviable balm and beatitude. It was a real pang to me, some weeks ago, when you were coming up to town, to have to put behind me, with so ungracious and uncompromising a gesture, the question, and the great temptation, of being there for a little at the same moment. But there are hours and seasons—and I know the face of them well—when my need to mind my business here, and to mind nothing else, becomes absolute—London tending rather overmuch, moreover, to set frequent and freshly-baited traps, at all times, for a still too susceptible and guileless old country mouse. All my consciousness centres, necessarily, just now, on a single small problem, that of managing to do an "American book" (or rather a couple of them,) that I had supposed myself, in advance, capable of doing on the spot, but that I had there, in fact, utterly to forswear—

time, energy, opportunity to write, every possibility quite failing me—with the consequence of my material, my “documents” over here, quite failing me too and there being nothing left for me but to run a race with an illusion, the illusion of still *seeing* it, which is, as it recedes, so to speak, a thousand lengths ahead of me. I shall keep it up as a tour de force, and produce my copy somehow (I have indeed practically done one vol. of “Impressions”—there are to be two, separate and differently-titled;) but I am unable, meanwhile, to dally by the way—the sweet wayside of Pall Mall—or to turn either to the right or the left. (My subject—unless I grip it tight—melts away—Rye, Sussex, is so little like it; and then where am I? And yet the thing interests me to do, though at the same time appalling me by its difficulty. But I didn’t mean to tell you this long story about it.) I hope you are plashing yourself in more pellucid waters—and I find I *assume* that there is in every way a great increase of the pellucid in your case by the fact of the neighbouring presence of your (as I again, and I trust not fallaciously assume) sympathetic collaterals. I should greatly like, here, a collateral or two myself—to find the advantage, across the sea, of the handful of those of mine who *are* sympathetic, makes me miss them, or the possibility of them, in this country of my adoption, which is more than kind, but less than kin. . . . I spend the month of January, further, in this place—then I do seek the metropolis for 12 or 14 weeks. I expect to hear from you that you have carried off some cup or other (sculling for preference) in your Bank Holiday Sports—so for heaven’s sake don’t disappoint me. You’re my one link with the Athletic world, and I like to be able to talk about you. Therefore, à propos of cups, all power to

your elbow! I know none now—no' cup—but the uninspiring cocoa—which I carry with a more and more doddering hand. But I am still, my dear Norris, very lustily and constantly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Paul Harvey.*

Lamb House, Rye.

March 11, 1906.

My dear Paul,

... It is delightful to me, please believe, not wholly to lose touch of you—ghostly and ineffective indeed as that touch seems destined to feel itself. I find myself almost wishing that the whirligig of time had brought round the day of your inscription with many honours on some comfortable "retired list" which might keep you a little less on the dim confines of the Empire, and make you thereby more accessible and conversible. Only I reflect that by the time the grey purgatory of South Kensington, or wherever, crowns and pensions your bright career, I, alas, shall have been whirled away to a sphere compared to which Salonica and even furthest Ind are easy and familiar resorts, with no crown at all, most probably—not even "heavenly," and no communication with you save by table-raps and telepathists (like a really startling communication I have just had from—or through—a "Medium" in America (near Boston,) a message purporting to come from my Mother, who died 25 years ago and from whom it ostensibly proceeded during a séance at which my sister-in-law, with two or three other persons, was present. The point is that the message is an allusion to a matter known (so personal is it to myself) to no other individual in the world but *me*—not *possibly* either to the medium or to my sister-in-law;



and an allusion so pertinent and *initiated* and tender and helpful, and yet so unhelped by any actual earthly knowledge on any one's part, that it quite astounds as well as deeply touches me. If the subject of the message had been conceivably in my sister-in-law's mind it would have been an interesting but not infrequent case of telepathy; but, as I say, it couldn't thinkably have been, and she only transmits it to me, after the fact, not even fully understanding it. So, I repeat, I am astounded!—and almost equally astounded at my having drifted into this importunate mention of it to you! But the letter retailing it arrived only this a.m. and I have been rather full of it.)—I had heard of your present whereabouts from Edward Childe . . . and I give you my word of honour that my great thought was, already before your own good words had come, to attest to you, on my own side, and pen in hand, my inextinguishable interest in you. I came back from the U.S. after an absence of nearly a year (11 months) by last midsummer, whereupon my joy at returning to this so little American nook took the form of my having stuck here fast (with great arrears of sedentary occupation &c.) till almost the other day . . . I found my native land, after so many years, interesting, formidable, fearsome and fatiguing, and much more difficult to see and deal with in any extended and various way than I had supposed. I was able to do with it far less than I had hoped, in the way of visitation—I found many of the conditions too deterrent; but I did what I could, went to the far South, the Middle West, California, the whole Pacific coast &c., and spent some time in the Eastern cities. It is an extraordinary world, an altogether huge “proposition,” as they say there,

giving one, I think, an immense impression of material and political power; but almost cruelly charmless, in effect, and calculated to make one crouch, ever afterwards, as cravenly as possible, at Lamb House, Rye—if one happens to have a poor little L.H., R., to crouch in. This I am accordingly doing very hard—with intervals of London inserted a good deal at this Season—I go up again, in a few days, to stay till about May. So I am not making history, my dear Paul, as you are; I am at least only making my very limited and intimate own. Vous avez beau dire, you, and Mrs Paul, and Miss Paul, are making that of Europe—though you don't appear to realize it any more than M. Jourdain did that he was talking prose. Have patience, meanwhile—you will have plenty of South Kensington later on (among other retired pro-consuls and where Miss Paul will “come out”;) and meanwhile you are, from the L.H. point of view, a family of thrilling Romance. And it *must* be interesting to améliorer le sort des populations—and to see real live Turbaned Turks going about you, and above all to have, even in the sea, a house from which you look at divine Olympus. You live with the gods, if not like them—and out of all this unutterable Anglo-Saxon banality—so extra-banalized by the extinction of dear Arthur Balfour. I take great joy in the prospect of really getting hold of you, all three, next summer. I count, fondly, on your presence here and I send the very kindest greeting and blessing to your two companions. The elder is of course still very young, but how old the younger must now be!

. . . Yours, my dear Paul, always and ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William James.*

Professor and Mrs. William James had been in California at this time of the great San Francisco earthquake and conflagration. They fortunately escaped uninjured, but for some days H. J. had been in deep anxiety, not knowing their exact whereabouts.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.  
May 4th, 1906.

Beloved Ones !

I wrote you, feverishly, last Saturday—but now comes in a blest cable from Harry telling of your being as far on your way home as at Denver and communicating thence in inspired accents and form, and this, for which I have been yearning (the news of your having to that extent shaken off the dust of your ruin), fills me with such joy that I scrawl you these still agitated words of jubilation—though I can't seem to you less than incoherent and beside the mark, I fear, till I have got your letter from Stanford which Harry has already announced his expedition of on the 28th. (This must come in a day or two more.) Meanwhile there was three days ago an excellent letter in the *Times* from Stanford itself (or P.A.) enabling me, for the first time, to conceive a little, and a trifle less luridly to imagine, the facts of your case. I had at first believed those facts to be that you were thrown bedless and roofless upon the world, semi-clad and semi-starving, and with all that class of phenomena about you. But how do I know, after all, even yet? and I await your light with an anxiety that still endures. I have just parted with Bill, who dined with me, and who is to lunch with me to-morrow—(I going in the evening to the "Academy Dinner.") I have, since the arrival of Harry's telegram, or

cable of reassurance—the second to that effect, not this of to-day, which makes the third and best—I have been, as I say, trying, under pressure, a three days' motor trip with the Whartons, much frustrated by bad weather and from which I impatiently and prematurely and gleefully returned to-day: so that I have been separated from B. for 48 hours. But I tell you of him rather than talk to you, in the air, of your own weird experiences. He is to go on to Paris on the 6th, having waited over here to go to the Private View of the Academy, to see me again, and to make use of Sunday 6th (a *dies non* in Paris as here) for his journey. It has been delightful to me to have him near me, and he has spent and re-spent long hours at the National Gallery, from which he derives (as also from the Wallace Collection) great stimulus and profit. I am extremely struck with his *seriousness* of spirit and intention—he seems to me *all* in the thing he wants to do (and awfully intelligent about it;) so that in fine he seems to me to bring to his design quite an exceptional quality and kind of intensity . . . What a family—with the gallantries of the pair of *you* thrown in! Well, you, beloved Alice, have needed so exceedingly a “change,” and I was preaching to you that you should arrive at one somehow or perish—whereby you have had it with a vengeance, and I hope the effects will be appreciable (that is not altogether accurst) to you. What I really now *most* feel the pang and the woe of is my not being there to hang upon the lips of your conjoined eloquence. I really think I must go over to you again for a month—just to listen to you. But I wait and am ever more and more fondly your

HENRY.

*To William James.*

The Athenaeum, Pall Mall, S.W.

May 11th, 1906.

Dearest William,

To-day at last reach me (an hour ago) your blest letter to myself of April 19th and Alice's not less sublime one (or a type-copy of the same,) addressed to Irving St. and forwarded by dear Peg, to whom all thanks . . . I have written to Harry a good deal from the first, and to your dear selves last week, and you will know how wide open the mouth of my desire stands to learn from you everything and anything you can chuck into it. Most vivid and pathetic these so surprisingly lucid pictures dashed down—or rather so calmly committed to paper—by both of you in the very midst of the crash, and what a hell of a time you must have had altogether! What a noble act your taking your Miss Martin to the blazing and bursting San Francisco—and what a devil of a day of anxiety it must have given to the sublime Alice. Dearest sublime Alice, your details of feeding the hungry and sleeping in the backyard bring tears to my eyes. I hope all the later experience didn't turn to *worse* dreariness and weariness—it was probably kept human and "vivid" by the whole associated elements of drama. Yet how differently I read it all from knowing you now restored to your liberal home and lovely brood—where I hope you are guest-receiving and housekeeping as little as possible. How your mother must have folded you in! I kept thinking of her, for days, please tell her, almost more than of you! It's hideous to want to condemn you to *write* on top of everything else—yet I sneakingly hope for more, though indeed

it wouldn't take much to make me sail straight home—just to talk with you for a week. . . . I return to Rye on the 16th with rapture—after too long a tangle of delays here. However, it is no more than the right moment for adequate charm of season, drop (unberufen!) of east wind etc.—But why do I talk of these trifles when what I am after all really full of is the hope that they have been crowning you both with laurels and smothering you with flowers at Cambridge. Also, greedily (for you), with the hope that you didn't come away *minus* any lecture-money due to you. . . .

But good-bye for now—with ever so tender love.

Ever your HENRY.

*To Miss Margaret James.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
November 8th, 1906.

Dearest Peggot,

I have had before me but an hour or two your delightful, though somewhat agitating letter of October 29th, and I am so touched by your faithful memory of your poor fond old Uncle, and by your snatching an hour to devote to him, even as a brand from the burning, that I scribble you this joyous acknowledgment before I go to bed. I have been immensely interested in your whole Collegiate adventure—fragments of the history of which, so far as you've got, I've had from your mother—and all the more interested that, by a blest good fortune, I happen to *know* your scholastic shades and so am able, in imagination, to cling to you and follow you round. I seem to make out that you are very physically comfortable, all round, and I have indeed a very charming image of Bryn Mawr, though I

dare say these months adorn it less than my June-time. I yearn tenderly over your homesickness—and fear I don't help you with it when I tell you how well I understand it as, at first, your inevitable portion. To exchange the realm of talk and taste of Irving St. and the privileges and luxury of your Dad's and your Mother's company and genius for the common doings and sayings, the common air and effluence of other American homes, represents a sorry drop—which can only be softened for you by the diversion of seeking out what charms of sorts these other homes may have had that Irving St. lacks. You may not find any, to speak of, but meanwhile you will have wandered away and in so doing will have left the bloom of your nostalgia behind. It doesn't remain acute, but there will be always enough for you to go home with again. And you will make your little sphere of relations—which will give out an interest of their own; and see a lot of life and realise a lot of types, not to speak of all the enriching of your mind and augmentation of your power. Your poor old uncle groans with shame when he bethinks himself of the scant and miserable education, and educative opportunity, *he* had [compared with] his magnificent modern niece. No one took any interest whatever in *his* development, except to neglect or snub it where it might have helped—and any that he was ever to have he picked up wholly by himself. But that is very ancient history now—and he is very glad to have picked up Lamb House, where he sits writing you this of a wet November night and communes, so far as possible, on the spot, with the ghost of the little niece who came down from Harrow to spend her holidays in so dull and patient and Waverley-novelly a fashion with him. . . . I rejoice greatly in your sweet companion—

I mean in the sweetness of her as chum and comrade, *for* you, and I send, I hope not presumptuously, a slice of your Uncle's blessing. Also is it uplifting to hear that you find Miss Carey Thomas benevolent and inspiring—she struck me as a very able and accomplished and intelligent lady, and I should like to send her through you, if you have a chance, my very faithful remembrance and to thank her very kindly for her appreciation of my niece. But I hope she doesn't, or won't, work you to the bone! Goodnight, dear Child.  
Your fond old Uncle.

*To Mrs. Dew-Smith.*

This refers to the revision of *Roderick Hudson*, which was to head the "New York" edition of his novels, now definitely announced.

Lamb House, Rye.  
November 12th, 1906.

Dear Mrs. Dew-Smith,

Very kind your note about the apples and about poor R.H.! Burgess Noakes is to climb the hill in a day or two, basket on arm, and bring me back the rosy crop, which I am finding quite the staff of life.

As for the tidied-up book, I am greatly touched by your generous interest in the question of the tidying-up, and yet really think your view of that process erratic and—quite of course—my own view well inspired! But we are really both right, for to attempt to retouch the *substance* of the thing would be as foolish as it would be (in a *done* and impenetrable structure) impracticable. What I have tried for is a mere revision of surface and expression, as the thing is positively in many places quite *vilely* written! The essence



of the matter is wholly unaltered—save for seeming in places, I think, a little better brought out. At any rate the deed is already perpetrated—and I do continue to wish perversely and sorely that you had waited—to re-peruse—for this prettier and cleaner form. However, I ought only to be devoutly grateful—as in fact I am—for your power to re-peruse at all, and will come and thank you afresh as soon as you return to the fold; as to which I beg you to make an early signal to yours most truly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

The desired visit to George Sand's Nohant was brought off in the following year, when H. J. motored there with Mrs. Wharton. "Rue Barbet de Jouy" is the address in Paris of M. Paul Bourget.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.  
November 17th, 1906.

Dear Mrs. Wharton,

I had from you a shortish time since a very beautiful and interesting letter—into the ink to thank you for which my pen has been perpetually about to dip, and now comes the further thrill of your "quaint" little picture card with its news of the Paris winter and the romantic rue de Varenne; on which the pen straightway plunges into the fluid. This is really charming and uplifting news, and I applaud the free sweep of your "line of life" with all my heart. We shall be almost neighbours, and I will most assuredly hie me as promptly as possible across the scant interspace of the Channel, the Pas-de-Calais &c: where the very first question on which I shall beset you will be your adventure and impression of Nohant—as to which I burn and yearn for fond particulars.

Perhaps if you have the proper Vehicle of Passion—as I make no doubt—you will be going there once more—in which case *do* take me! And such a suave and convenient crossing as I meanwhile wish you—and such a provision of philosophy laid up, in advance, for use in, and about, rue Barbet de Jouy! You will have finished your new fiction, I “presume”—if it isn’t presumptuous—before embarking? and I do so for the right of the desire to congratulate, in that case, and envy and sympathise—being in all sorts of *embarras* now, myself, over the finish of many things. I pant for the start of that work and languish to take it up. I think I have had no chance to tell you how much I admired your single story in the Aug. *Scribner*—beautifully done, I thought, and full of felicities and achieved values and pictures. All the same, with the rue de Varenne &c, don’t go in too much for the French or the “Franco-American” subject—the real field of your extension is *here*—it has far more fusability with *our* native and primary material; between which and French elements there is, I hold, a disparity as complete as between a life led in trees, say, and a life led in—sea—depths, or in other words between that of climbers and swimmers—or (crudely) that of monkeys and fish. Is the Play Thing meanwhile climbing or swimming?—I take much interest in its fate. But you will tell me of these things—in February! It will be *then* I shall scramble over. I go home an hour or two hence (to stay as still as possible) after a night—only—spent in town. The perpetual summonses and solicitations of London (some of which *have* to be met) are at times a maddening worry—or almost. I am wondering if you are not feeling just now perhaps a good deal, at Lenox, in the apparently delightful old 1840 way—a good snowstorm ending,

and the Westinghouse colouring, as I suppose, a good deal blurred. But how I want to have it all—the gossip of the countryside—from you! Some of it has come to me as rather dreadful . . . and that is what some of the lone houses in the deep valleys we motored through used to make me think of! . . .

I am meanwhile yours very constantly,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To W. E. Norris.*

16 Lewes Crescent,  
Brighton.  
December 23rd, 1906.

My dear Norris,

I think it was from here I wrote you last Christmas; by which I devoutly hope I don't give you a handle for saying: "And not from anywhere since then." But I am but too aware that it has been at the best a hideous record of silence and apparent gloom, and also fully feel that after such base *laideurs* of behaviour explanations, attenuations, protestations, are as the mere rustle of the wind and had really better be left unuttered. That only adds to the dark burden of one's consciousness when one does write; one crawls into the dear outraged presence with all one's imperfections on one's head. So I'll indulge, at any rate, in no specific plea—but only in that general one of the fact that the letter-writing faculty within me has become extinct through increasing age, infirmity, embarrassment (the spelling faculty, even, you see, *almost* extinct,) and general demoralization and desolation. Twenty reproachful spectres rise up before me—out of whom your fine sad face is only the most awful. All I can say for myself (and *you*) is that among these feeble

reparations that I am trying to make in the way of "hardy annuals"—hardy in the sense, I fear, of a sort of shameful brazenness—this "Christmas letter" to you takes absolute precedence. I wrote indeed to Rhoda Broughton a couple of days since, from town, but that was a melancholy matter on the occasion of my having gone up to poor dear Hamilton Aïdé's memorial service (where I didn't see her, though she may have been present, and of which I thought she would care for some little account. It was a very beautiful and touching musical service. But I haven't seen *her* for a long long time, alas!—amid these years of more and more interspaced—and finished—occasions.) Of course I am hoping that this will lie on your table on Xmas morning—in all sorts of charming company, and not before and not after. But it's difficult to time communications at this upheaved season, especially from another (non-London) province, and I trust to the happy hazard, though still a little ruffled by a sense of the break-down of things (the "public services") that compelled me yesterday, coming down here from Victoria, to be shoved into (as the only place in the train) the small connecting-space between two Pullmans, where I stuck, all the way, in a tight bunch of five or six other men and three portmanteaux and boxes: quite the sort of treatment (one's nose half in the w.c. included) that the English traveller writes from Italy infuriated letters to the *Times* about. I figure you at all events exempt from any indignity of movement (and the conditions of movement nowadays almost all include indignity) and still sitting up on your Torquay slope as on a mild Olympus and with this strife of circulating humans far below you. But when I reflect that I don't *know*, for certain, any of your actu-

alities I reflect with a crimson countenance on the months that have elapsed. I have before me as I write a beautiful letter from you, of the date of which nothing would induce me to remind you—but that is not quite your contemporary history. . . . Putting your own news at its quietest, however, my own runs it close—for save for this small episode (a stay with some old and intensely tranquil American friends established here for the ending of *their* days,) and putting aside a few days at a time in London, which I find periodically inevitable, and even quite like, I haven't stirred for ages from my own house, the suitability of which to my modest scheme of existence grows fortunately more and more marked. I spent last summer there—the most beautiful of one's life I think—without the briefest of breaks—and that gregarious time is the one at which I like least to circulate. The little place, alas, becomes itself—like all places save Torquay, I judge—more and more gregarious; and there were a good many days when even my own small premises bristled too much with the invader. But there is a great virtue in sitting tight—you sit out many things; even bores are, comparatively speaking, loose; and I had a blest sort of garden (by which I'm far from meaning gardening) summer. What it must have been beside your sapphire sea! I return, at any rate, in a few days, to sit tight again, till early in February, when there are reasons for my probably going for five or six weeks to Paris; and even possibly—or impossibly—to Rome; one of the principal of these being that the prospect fills me with a blackness of horror that I find really alarming as a sign of moral paralysis and abjection; so that I ought to try to fly in the face of it. But I shall fly at the best, I fear, very low! . . .

I needn't tell you how much I hope and pray that this may find you, as they say, in health. There's an icy blast here to-day—yet I take for granted that if it weren't Sunday you would be doing something very prodigious and muscular in the teeth of it. The prize (of long activity and sweet survival) is with those whose hardness is greater than other hardnesses. And yours is greater than that of the sea-wave and all the rest of opposing nature—though I make this imputation only on behalf of your sporting resources. I appeal to the softest corner of the softest part of the rest of you to make before too long some magnanimous sign to yours very constantly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Thomas Sergeant Perry.*

Mr. Perry, whose recollections of H. J. and his brothers at Newport have been read on an early page of these volumes, was at this time living in Paris.

Brighton.

Boxing Day, 1906.

My dear Thomas,

I have remained silent—in the matter of your last good letter—under a great stress of correspondence *de fin d'année*; which you on your side must be having also to reckon with. The end is not yet, but I want to greet you without a more indecent delay and to impress you with a sense of my cordial and seasonable sentiments; such as you will communicate, please, unreservedly to les vôtres around the Xmastide hearth. I am spending the so equivocal period with some very quiet old friends at this place, and I write this in presence of a shining silvery shimmery sea, on one of the prettiest possible south-coast mornings. It's like

the old Brighton that you may read about (Miss Honeyman's) in the early chapters of the "New-comes." But you are of course bathed, in Paris, in a much more sumptuous splendour. But what a triste *Nouvel An* for the poor foolish, or misguided church (not) of France! A little more and "we Protestants"—you and I—will have to subscribe for it. Your "Censeur" was very welcome, and the portrait of Mme Barboux of the last heart-breaking expertness. But somehow these things are all *pen*, as if all life had run to it—and one wonders what becomes of the rest (of consciousness—save the literary). Yet the literary breaks down with them too on occasion—as in the apparent failure to discover that the value of Shakespeare is that of the most splendid poetry, as expression, that ever was on earth, and that they are reckoning for him apparently as by the *langue* of Sardou. How funnily solemn, or solemnly funny, the little Goncourt Academy!—yet when they *have* made up their mind I shall like to hear on whom and what, and you must tell me, and I will get the book.

Bill, I am afraid meanwhile, will have been absent from your Yuletide revels: if he has gone to Geneva (of the *bise*) as he hinted to me that he might and as I don't quite envy him. But à cet âge—! . . . I think I really shall see you dans le courant de février I presently go home to work toward that end, *ferme*. I send again a thousand friendships to Mrs. Thomas and the Miss Thomases and am always yours and theirs,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Gaillard T. Lapsley.*

Mr. Lapsley, now settled in England, had become the neighbour (at Cambridge) of Mr. A. C. Benson and the present editor—the “Islander” and the “Librarian” of the following letter.

16 Lewes Crescent,  
Brighton.

December 27th, 1906.

My dear, dear Gaillard,

I am touched almost to anguish by your beautiful and generous letter, and lose not an instant in thanking you for it with the last effusion. It is no vain figure of speech, but a solemn, an all-solemn verity, that even were I not thus blessedly hearing from you at this felicitous time, I should have been, within the next two or three days, writing to you, and I had formed and registered the sacred purpose and vow, to tell you that really these long lapses of sight and sound of you don't do for me at all and that I groan over the strange fatality of this last so persistent failure—during long months, years!—of my power to become in any way possessed of you. (My own fault, oh yes—a thousand times; for which I bow my forehead in the dust.) My intense respect for your so noble occupations and your so distinguished “personality” have had a good deal to say to the matter, moreover; there is a vulgar untimeliness of approach to the highly-devoted and the deeply-cloistered, of which I have always hated to appear capable! It is just what I may, however, even now be guilty of if I put you the crude question of whether there isn't perhaps any moment of this January when you could come to me for a couple of deeply amicable days? . . . I don't quite know what your holidays are,



nor what heroic immersions in scholastic abysses you may not cultivate the depressing ideal of carrying on even while they last, but I seem to reflect that you never *will* be able to come to me free and easy (there's a sweet prophecy for you!) and that my only course therefore is to tug at you, blindfold, through, and in spite of, your tangle of silver coils. I know, no one better, that it's hateful to pay visits, and especially winter ones, from (far) and *to* (far) 'tother side of town; but to brood on such invidious truths is simply to plot for your escaping me altogether; and I reflect further that you are, with your great train-services, decently suburban to London, and that the dear old 4.28 from Charing Cross to Rye brings you down in exactly two not discomfortable hours. Also my poor little house is now really warm—even hot; I put in very effective hot-water pipes only this autumn. Ponder these things, my dear Gaillard—and the further fact that I intensely yearn for you!—struggle with them, master them, subjugate them; then pick out your pair of days (two full and clear ones with *me*, I mean, exclusive of journeys) and let me know that you arrive. I hate to worry you about it, and shall understand anything and everything; but come if you humanly can.

When I think of the charm of possibly taking up with you by the Lamb House fire the various interesting impressions, allusions, American references and memories etc., with which your letter is so richly bedight, I kind of feel that you *must* come, to tell me more of everything. . . . So, just yet, I shall reserve these thrills; for I feel that I shall and must, by hook or by crook, see you. I expect to go abroad about Feb. 5th for a few weeks—but *that* won't prevent. I rejoice to hear your news, however sketchy, of the

Islander of Ely and the Librarian of Magdalene. Commend me as handsomely as possible to the lone Islander—how gladly would I at the very perfect right moment be his man Friday, or Saturday, or, even better, Sunday!—and tell Percy Lubbock, with my love, that I missed him acutely the other week at Windsor (which he will understand and perhaps even believe.) What disconcerted me in your letter was your mention of your having, while in America, been definitely *ill*—a proceeding of which I wholly disapprove. I desire to talk to you about that too, even though I meanwhile discharge upon you, my dear Gaillard, the abounding sympathy of yours always and ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Bruce Porter.*

Mr. Bruce Porter had written from San Francisco, describing the earthquake of the preceding spring.

Lamb House, Rye.

February 19th, 1907.

My dear Bruce Porter,

I have had from you a very noble and beautiful letter, which has given me exceeding great joy, and which I have only not sooner thanked you for—well, by reason of many interruptions and preoccupations—mainly those resulting from my being in London (the *hourly* importunate) when it came to me; at which seasons, and during which sojourns, I always put off as much correspondence as possible till I get back to this comparative peace. (I returned here but three days since.) How shall I tell you, at any rate, today, how your letter touches and even, as it were, relieves me? I had felt like such a Backward Brute in writing mine, but now in communication with your treasures of indulgence

and generosity, I feel only your admirable virtue and the high price I set upon your friendship. So I thank you, all tenderly, and assure you that you have poured balm on much of my anxiety, not to say on my shame. Your account of those unimaginable weeks of your great crisis are of a thrilling and uplifting interest—and yet everything remains unimaginable to me—as to the sense of your whole actual situation; and the lurid newspapers, on all this, do nothing but darken and distract my vision. I hope you are living in less of a pandemonium than they, basest afflictions of our afflicted age, give you out to be—but verily the bridge of comprehension is strained and shaky and impassable between this little old-world russet shore and your vertiginous cosmic coast. Let me cling therefore to you, dear Bruce Porter, *personally*, as to the friend of those three or four all but fabulous antediluvian days, and keep my hands on you tight, till, by gentle insistent pressure, I have made you yield to that delightful possibility of your perhaps at some nearish day presenting yourself here. You speak of it as a discussable thing—it's the cream of your letter. Let me just say once for all you shall have the very eagerest and intensest welcome. Heaven therefore speed the day. I go to the continent for a few weeks—eight or ten, probably at most—a fortnight hence; but return after that to be here in the most continuous fashion for months and months to come—all summer and autumn. You are vividly interesting too on the subject of Fanny Stevenson and her situation—and your picture is filled out a little by my hearing of her as in a rather obscure and inaccessible town “somewhere on the Riviera”; communicating with a friend or two in London in an elusive and deprecative fashion—withholding her address

so as not to be overtaken or met with (apparently.) Poor lady, poor barbarous and merely *instinctive* lady—ah, what a tangled web we weave! I probably shall fail of seeing her, and yet, with a sneaking kindness for her that I have, shall be sorry wholly to lose her. She won't, I surmise, come to England. But if I see you here I shall repine at nothing. *Do* manage to be sustained for the gallant pilgrimage—and do let it count a little, for that, that I *am* here, my dear Bruce Porter, ever so clingingly and constantly yours,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Grace Norton.*

Lamb House, Rye.

March 5th, 1907.

Dearest Grace,

Hideous as is really the time that has elapsed since I last held any communication with you (on that torrid July 3d, p.m., in Kirkland St.—I won't name the year!) it has seemed to me extraordinarily brief and has in fact passed like a flash! Measured by the calendar it's incredible—measured by my sense of the way the months whizz by (more and *more* like the telegraph-posts at the window of the train,) it has been a simple good "run" from the eve of my leaving America to the present moment. I came straight back here—to a great monotony and regularity and tranquillity of life (on the whole,) and haven't had really (and *shouldn't* have, didn't I begin to count!) any of the conscious desolation of having drifted away from you. However, beginning to count makes it another and rather horrible matter—or *would* make it so if you and I ever counted (in the dreary way of "times" of writing,) or ever had, or ever will. At the same time I *yearn* to hear from you, and it may

increase my chance of that boon if I tell you with all urgency how much I do. On that side, though you, through your habitual magnanimity, won't "mind" my long silence unduly, I mind it myself, with this very first word of my breaking it. Because I'm *talking* with you now again, and that brings back so many, too many things; and to do so seems the pleasantest and dearest and most natural thing in the world. I leave this place to-morrow for Paris—that is sleep at Dover—but an hour and a half hence—and go farther the next day; which is the first time I've stirred (except for an occasional week in London) since I last stirred out of sight of you. I've been for a long time under the promise of going over to see William's Bill, who is working tooth and nail, to every appearance, at Julian's studio— . . . If I can I shall dash down to Italy—to Florence and Venice—for a short spell before restoration—to *this* domicile—the last time, I daresay, that I shall ever brave the distinctly enfeebled spell (as I last felt it to be—seven years ago) of those places; so utterly the prey of the Barbarian now that if you still ever yearn for them take an easy comfort and thank your stars that you knew them in the less blighted and dishonoured time. It is very singular to me, living here (in this comparatively old-world corner which has nothing else but its *own* little immemorial blots and vulgarisms—besides all its great merits), to find myself plunged into the strain of the rankest and most promiscuous actuality as soon as, crossing to the Continent, I direct myself to the shrines of a superior antiquity. One is so out of the stream here that one almost wholly forgets it—and then it is incongruously the most sacred pilgrimages that most vociferously remind one—because (to put it as gracefully as possible) most cosmopolitanly.

“Left to myself” I really think I should scarce ever budge from here again—unless to go back to the U.S., which, honestly, I should like almost as much as I should (in some connections—the “travelling” above all) dread it. But the dread wouldn’t be the same dread of the American-Anglican and German Italy. These will strike you as cheerful sentiments for the eve of a pleasure-trip abroad, and I shall feel better when I’ve started; but even so the travel-impulse (which I’ve had almost no opportunity in my life really to gratify) is extinct as from inanition (and personal antiquity!) and above all, more and more, the only way I care to travel is by reading. To stay at home and read is more and more my *ideal*—and it’s one that you have beautifully realized. I think it was the sense of all that it has so admirably done for you that confirmed me while I was with you in my high estimation of it. Great, every way, dear Grace, and all-exemplary, I thought the dignity and coherency and benignity of your life—long after beholding it as it has taken me (by the tiresome calendar again!) to make you this declaration. I at any rate have the greatest satisfaction in the thought—the fireside vision—of your still and always nobly leading it. I don’t know, and how should I? much about you in detail—but I think I have a kind of instinct of how the side-brush of the things that I do get in a general way a reverberation of touches and affects you, and as in one way or another there seems to have been plenty of the stress and strain and pain of life on the circumference (and even some of it at the centre, as it were) of your circle, I’ve not been without feeling (and responding to,) I boldly say, *some* of your vibrations. I hope at least the most acute of them have proceeded from causes presenting

for you—well, what shall I say?—an *interest*!! Even the most worrying businesses often have one—but there are sides of them that we could discover in talk over the fire but that I don't appeal to you lucidly to portray to me. Besides, I can imagine them exquisitely—as well as where they fail of that beguilement, and believe me, therefore, I am living with you, as I write, quite as much as if I made out—as I used to—by your pharos-looking lamplight through your ample and lucid window-pane, that you were sitting “in,” as they say here, and were thereupon planning an immediate invasion. I have given intense ear to every breath of indication about Charles and his condition, and in particular to the appearance that, so far as I understand, he has been presiding and dignifying, as he alone remains to have done, the Longfellow centenary—a symptom, as it has seemed to me, of very handsome vitality. . . .

I have been very busy all these last months in raising my Productions for a (severely-sifted) Collective and Definitive Edition—of which I even spoke to you, I think, when I saw you last, as it was then more or less definitely planned. Then hitches and halts supervened—the whole matter being complicated by the variety and the conflict of my scattered publishers, till at last the thing is on the right basis (in the two countries—for it has all had to be brought about by quite separate arts here and in America,) and a “handsome”—I hope really handsome and not too cheap—in fact sufficiently dear—array will be the result—owing much to close amendment (and even “rewriting”) of the four earliest novels and to illuminatory classification, collocation, juxtaposition and separation through the whole series. The work on the earlier novels has involved much labour—to

the best effect for the vile things, I'm convinced; but the real tussle is in writing the Prefaces (to each vol. or book,) which are to be long—very long!—and loquacious—and competent perhaps to *pousser à la vente*. The Edition is to be of 23 vols. and there are to be some 15 Prefaces (as some of the books are in two,) and twenty-three lovely frontispieces—all of which I have this winter very ingeniously called into being; so that *they* at least only await “process” reproduction. The prefaces, as I say, are difficult to do—but I have found them of a jolly interest; and though I am not going to let you read one of the fictions themselves over I shall expect you to read all the said Introductions. Thus, my dear Grace, do I—not at all artlessly—prattle to you; artfully, on the contrary, toward casting some spell of chatter on yourself. . . . Meanwhile the Irving Street echoes that have come to me have been of the din of voices and the affluence of strangers and the conflict of nationalities and the rush of everything. I don't quite distinguish you in the thick of it, but I suppose Shady Hill has had its share. Will you give my tender love there when you next go? Will you kindly keep a little in the dark for the present my fond chatter about my poor Edition? Above all, dearest Grace, will you believe me, through thick and thin, your ever devoted old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William James, junior.*

Grand Hotel, Pau.

March 26, 1907.

Dearest Bill,

This is just a word to tell you that your poor old far-flying Uncle is safe and sound and



That  
 had the sense of his duties as his  
 opportunities - of what our success  
 after all call his position.  
 It has been a great pain.

attention to his mother, who is very fond of the old tradi-  
 tions. But you must remember that he speaks for no  
 one but himself."

"Oh, I don't mind him, my dear Norman. Good  
 heavens, I know what he amounts to."

"In the good old times," said Valentine, "marquises  
 and counts used to have their appointed fools and jesters.  
 and crack jokes for them. Nowadays we see a great strap-  
 ping democrat keeping ~~about~~ about him to play the  
 fool. It's a good situation, but I certainly am very  
 degenerate."

M. de Bellegarde fixed his eyes for some time on the  
 floor. "My mother informed me," he said presently,  
 "of the announcement that you made to her the other  
 evening." *want so much to*

"That I ~~decided~~ marry your sister?" said M.  
 Marquis, slowly, "with my sisters the Comtesse de Cillac  
 The proposal was ~~accepted~~ and received, on my mother's  
 part, ~~with great~~ with great satisfaction. She naturally took me  
 into her counsels, and I ~~was~~ was most anxious attention

sir? - Norman  
 was all good -  
 humour.

has let me

the  
 Valentines  
 of this  
 world

the young  
 man said

against another. Our conclusion has been that we  
you  
My mother has desired me to inform  
She will have the honour of saying  
a few words to you on the subject herself. Meanwhile  
heads of the family ~~you are expected to~~  
Newman got up and came nearer.  
"You will be needing to hinder me and all your ~~words~~  
help ~~me~~."

"I will recommend my sister to accept you."  
Newman passed his hand over his face, and pressed it  
for a moment upon his eyes. This promise had a great  
sound, and yet the pleasure he took in it was embittered  
by his having to stand there so and receive ~~the promise~~

engage to you to think  
my weight in the  
scale of your success?

personally will  
do all you can  
to look  
me up, eh?"

you have  
our sanction,  
as  
of her  
dearable  
attitude.

your my mother  
for you can per-  
haps even your  
self imagine  
a grand deal  
to think  
about.

see no reason to  
oppose your pretension -  
though of course the  
matter. The question of your  
success, rests mainly with yourself.

certain  
would say,

desire to  
approach the  
Countess de  
Cintral with  
that idea (and  
ask of us therefore  
your facility for  
so doing.)

The subject has had  
my most careful  
attention.

perhaps  
appear to  
obscure.

greatly enjoying [himself], so far, after étapes consisting of Bois, Poitiers, and Bordeaux, with wonderful minor stops, déjeuners and other impressions in between. We got here last night—into the balmiest, tepidest, dustiest south, and stay three days or so, for excursions, going probably after today's luncheon to Lourdes and back. This large, smooth old France is wonderful (*wisely* seen, as we are seeing it,) and I know it already much more infinitely well. The motor is a magical marvel—discreetly and honourably used, as we are using it—and my hosts are full of amenity, sympathy, appreciation, etc. (as well as of wondrous other servanted and avant-courier'd arts of travel,) so that we are an excellent combination and most happy family—including our most admirable American chauffeur from Lee, Mass., whose native Yankee saneness and intelligence (projected into these unprecedented conditions) makes me as proud of him as he is of his Panhard car. On Thursday or Friday (at furthest) we turn "her" head to Paris—but of course with other stops and impressions—though none, I think, of more than one night. Don't dream of troubling to write—I will write again as we draw nearer. I hope these efflorescent days (if you have them) don't turn your stomach too much against the thick taste of the Julian broth. I already long to see you again.

Ever your affectionate

HENRY JAMES.

*To Howard Sturgis.*

The plan of approaching Italy through South Germany and Austria was not carried out. He presently went straight from Paris to Rome.

58 Rue de Varenne, Paris.  
April 13th, 1907.

Dearest Howard,

I find your beautiful tragic wail on my return from a wondrous, miraculous motor tour of three weeks and a day with these admirable friends of ours, who so serve one up all the luxuries of the season and all the ripe fruits of time that one's overloaded plate will hold. We got back from—from everywhere, literally—last night; and in presence of a table groaning under arrears and calendars and other stationery I can but, as it were, fold you in my arms. You talk of sad and fearful things . . . and I don't know what to say to you (at least in this poor inky, scratchy way.) What I should like to be able to say is that I will come down to Rome and see you even now; but this alas is not in my power without my altering all sorts of other pressing arrangements and combinations already made. I do hope to go to Rome for a little—a very little—stay later; but not before the middle or 20th of May; a time—a generally emptier, quieter time—I greatly prefer there to any other. It is of extreme importance to me to be (to remain) in Paris till May 1st—I haven't been here for years and shall probably never once again be here (or "come abroad" once again, like you) for the rest of my natural life. *Ergo* I am taking what there is of it for me—I can't afford, as it were, not to. And I have made my plans (if they hold) for approaching

Italy by South Germany, Vienna, Trieste, Venice &c.—all of which will bring me to Rome by the 20th of May about, when, I fear, you will well nigh—or certainly—have cleared out altogether. From Rome and Florence . . . I shall return straight home—where at least, then, I must infallibly see you. Or shall you pass through this place—homeward—before May 1st? The gentlest of lionesses bids me tell you what a tenderest welcome you would have from them. Hold up your heart, meanwhile, and remember, for God's sake, that there is a point beyond which the follies and infirmities of our friends and our *proches* have no right to ravage and wreck our own independence of soul. That quantity is too precious a contribution to the saving human sum of good, of lucidity, and we are responsible for the *entretien* of it. So keep yours, shake yours, up—well up—my dearest friend, and to this end believe in your admirable human use. To be “crushed” is to be of no use; and I for one insist that you shall be of some, and the most delightful, to *me*. (Feel everything, tant que vous voudrez—but *then* soar superior and don't leave tatters of your precious person on every bush that happens to bristle with all the avidities and egotisms.) We shall judge it all sanely and taste it all wisely and talk of it all (even) thrillingly—and profitably—yet; and I depend on your keeping that appointment with me. This is all, dearest Howard, now. I almost blush to break through your obsessions to the point of saying that my three weeks of really *seeing* this large incomparable France in our friends' chariot of fire has been almost the time of my life. It's the old travelling-carriage way glorified and raised to the 100th power. Will you very kindly say to Maud Story for me, with my love, that I am coming to

*purging*

Rome very nearly *all* to see her. I bless your companions and am your tout dévoué

HENRY JAMES.

*To Howard Sturgis.*

From Rome H. J. went to Cernitoio, Mr. Edward Boit's villa near Vallombrosa.

Hôtel de Russie, Rome.

May 29th, 1907.

Dearest Howard,

I've been disgustingly silent in spite of your so good prompt, blessed letter—but the waters of Rome have been closing over my head, for I have, each day, a good part of each, something urgent and imperative to do, "for myself," as it were—and everything the hours and the "people" bring forth has to be crowded into too scant a margin; with a consequent sensation of breathlessness that ill consorts alike with my figure, my years and my inclinations. I am "sitting for my bust," into the bargain—to Hendrik Andersen (it will be, I think, better than some other such work of his,) and that makes practically a great hole of two hours and a half in the day—without which, in truth (the promise to hold out to the end of the ordeal,) I should already have broken away from this now very highly-developed heat and dust and glare. My days "abroad" are violently shrinking—I am long since due at home; and my yearning for a damp grey temperate clime hourly develops. However, I didn't mean to pour forth this plaintive flood—but rather to take a fine healthy jolly tone over the fact of your own so happily achieved (I trust) liberation from the Roman yoke and your probable inhalation at this moment of the fresh air of the summits and of the tonic influence of admirable friends.

Need I say that I number poor dear deafened Rhoda's Florentine contact as among the stimulating?—since it surely must take more than deafness, must take utter and cataclysmal *dumbness*—and I'm not sure even *that* would get the better of her practical acuity—to make her fall from the tonic. But I'm very sorry—I mean for her I trust temporary trouble—and if I but knew where she is—which you don't mention—and *when* departing, or how long staying, would reach her if I might. I cherish the thought of getting off Tuesday at very latest—if I return intact from a long motor-day that awaits me at the hands of the Filippo Filippis on Saturday—as I believe. I drove with Mrs. Mason out yesterday afternoon to the Abbotts' villa—that is a very charming late afternoon tea-garden, and they told me you are soon to have them at Cernitoio. Expansive (not to say expensive) and illimitable you! All this time I don't tell you—tell Mildred Seymour—a tenth of the comfort I am deriving amid continued tension from the sense that *her* (and your) bow is for the time unstrung and hung up for the Vallombrosa pines to let the mountain-breeze loosely play with it. . . . I expect to be here till Tuesday a.m.—but I see I've said so. You shall then, and so shall Edward Boit (to whom and his girls I send tanti saluti, as well as to brave and beneficent Mr. William) have further news of yours, my dear Howard, ever affectionately,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Madame Wagnière.*

The name of this correspondent recalls a meeting at Florence, described in an early letter (vol. i, p. 23). Madame Wagnière (born Huntington) was now living in Switzerland.

Palazzo Barbaro,  
Venice.

June 23rd, 1907.

Dear Laura Wagnière,

I have waited since getting your good note to have the right moment and right light for casting the right sort of longing lingering look on the little house with the "*Giardinetto*" on the Canal Grande, to the right of Guggenheim as you face Guggenheim. I hung about it yesterday afternoon in the gondola with Mrs. Curtis, and we both thought it very charming and desirable, only that she has (perhaps a little vaguely) heard it spoken of as "damp," which I confess it looks to me just a trifle. However, this may be the vainest of calumnies. It does look expensive and also a trifle contracted, and is at present clearly occupied and with no outward trace of being to let about it at all. For myself, in this paradise of great household spaces (I mean Venice generally), I kind of feel that even the bribe of the Canal Grande and a *giardinetto* together wouldn't quite reconcile me to the purgatory of a very small, really (and not merely relatively) small house. . . . Mrs. Curtis is eloquent on the sacrifices one must make (to a high rent here) if one *must* have, for "smartness," the "Canal Grande" at any price. She makes me feel afresh what I've always felt, that what I should probably do with my own available ninepence would be to put up with some large marble halls in some comparatively modest or



remote locality, especially *della parte di fonda-  
menta nuova*, etc.; that is, so I got there air  
and breeze and light and *pulizia* and a dozen  
other conveniences! In fine, the place you  
covet is no doubt a dear little "fancy" place;  
but as to the question of "coming to Venice"  
if one can, I have but a single passionate emotion,  
a thousand times Yes! It would be for me, I  
feel, in certain circumstances (were I free, with a  
hundred other facts of my life different,) the  
solution of all my questions, and the consolation  
of my declining years. Never has the whole  
place seemed to me sweeter, dearer, *diviner*.  
It leaves everything else out in the cold. I  
wish I could dream of coming to *me mettre dans  
mes meubles* (except that my *meubles* would  
look so awful here!) beside you. I presume  
to enter into it with a yearning sympathy.  
Happy you to be able even to discuss it. . . .

This place and this large cool upper floor of  
the Barbaro, with all the space practically to  
myself, and draughts and scirocco airs playing  
over me indecently undressed, is more than ever  
delicious and unique. . . . The breath of the  
lagoon still plays up, but I mingle too much of  
another fluid with my ink, and I have no more  
clothes to take off. . . . I greet affectionately,  
yes affectionately, kind Henry, and the exquisite  
gold-haired maiden, and I am, dear Laura  
Wagnière, your very faithful old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

The Vicomte Robert d'Humières, poet and essayist, fell in action in France, April 26, 1915.

Lamb House, Rye.

August 11th, 1907.

My dear Edith and my dear Edward,

The d'Humières have just been lunching with me, and that has so reknotted the silver cord that stretched so tense from the first days of last March to the first of those of May—wasn't it?—that I feel it a folly in addition to a shame not yet to have written to you (as I have been daily and hourly yearning to do) ever since my return from Italy about a month ago. You flung me the handkerchief, Edith, just at that time—literally cast it at my feet: it met me, exactly, bounding—rebounding—from my hall-table as I recrossed my threshold after my long absence; which fact makes this tardy response, I am well aware, all the more graceless. And then came the charming little picture-card of the poor Lamb House hack grinding out his patient prose under your light lash and dear Walter B.'s—which should have accelerated my production to the point of its breaking in waves at your feet: and yet it's only to-night that my overburdened spirit—pushing its way, ever since my return, through the accumulations and arrears, in every sort, of absence—puts pen to paper for your especial benefit—if benefit it be. The charming d'Humières both, as I say, touring—*training*—in England, through horrid wind and weather, with a *bonne grace* and a wit and a Parisianism worthy of a better cause, amiably lunched with me a couple of days since on their way from town to Folkestone, and so back to

Plassac (don't you *like* "Plassac," down in our dear old Gascony?) the seat of M. de Dampierre—to whom, à ce qu'il paraît, that day at luncheon we were all exquisitely sympathetic! Well, it threw back the bridge across the gulfs and the months, even to the very spot where the great nobly-clanging glass door used to open to the arrested, the engulfing and disgorging car—for we sat in my little garden here and talked about you galore and kind of made plans (wild vain dreams, though I didn't let *them* see it!) for our all somehow being together again. . . . But oh, I should like to remount the stream of time much further back than their passage here—if it weren't (as it somehow always is when I get at urgent letters) ever so much past midnight. It was only with my final return hither that my deep draught of riotous living came to an end, and as the cup had originally been held to my lips all by your hands I somehow felt in presence of your interest and sympathy up to the very last, and as if you absolutely should have been *avertie* from day to day—I did the matter that justice at least. Too much of the story has by this time dropped out; but there are bits I wish I could save for you. . . . But I must break off—it's 1.15 a.m.!

*Aug: 12th.* I wrote you last from Rome, I think—didn't I? but it was after that that I heard of your having had at the last awful delays and complications, awful *strike*-botherations, over your sailing. I knew nothing of them at the time. . . . I can only hope that the horrid memory of it has been brushed and blown away for you by the wind of your American kilometres. I remained in Rome—for myself—a goodish while after last writing you, and there were charming moments, faint reverberations of the old-time refrains—with a happy tendency of

the superfluous, the incongruous crew to take its departure as the summer came on; yet I feel that I shouldn't care if I never saw the perverted place again, were it not for the memory of four or five adorable occasions—charming chances—enjoyed by the bounty of the Filippis . . . My point is that they carried me in their wondrous car (he drove it himself all the way from Paris via Macerata, and with four or five more picked-up inmates!) first to two or three adorable Roman excursions—to Fiumicino, e.g., where we crossed the Tiber on a medieval raft and then had tea—out of a Piccadilly tea-basket—on the cool sea-sand, and for a divine day to Subiaco, the unutterable, where I had never been; and then, second, down to Naples (where we spent two days) and back; going by the mountains (the valleys really) and Monte Cassino, and returning by the sea—i.e. by Gaeta, Terracina, the Pontine Marshes and the Castelli—quite an ineffable experience. This brought home to me with an intimacy and a penetration unprecedented how incomparably the old *coquaine* of an Italy is the most beautiful country in the world—of a beauty (and an interest and complexity of beauty) so far beyond any other that none other is worth talking about. The day we came down from Posilipo in the early June morning (getting out of Naples and round about by that end—the road from Capua on, coming, is *archi-damnabile*) is a memory of splendour and style and heroic elegance I never shall lose—and never shall renew! No—you will come in for it and Cook will picture it up, bless him, repeatedly—but I have drunk and turned the glass upside down—or rather I have placed it under my heel and smashed it—and the Gipsy life *with* it!—for ever. (Apropos of smashes, two or three days after we had crossed

the level-crossing of Caianello, near Caserta, seven Neapolitan "smarts" were *all* killed dead—and this by no coming of the train, but simply by furious reckless driving and a deviation, a *slip*, that dashed them against a rock and made an instant end. The Italian driving is *crapulous*, and the roads mostly not good enough.) But I mustn't expatiate. I wish I were younger. But for that matter the "State Line" would do me well enough this evening—for it's again the stroke of midnight. If it weren't I would tell you more. Yes, I wish I were to be seated with you to-morrow—catching the breeze-borne "burr" from under Cook's fine nose! How is Gross, dear woman, and how are Mitou and Nicette—whom I missed so at Monte Cassino? I spent four days—out from Florence—at Ned Boit's wondrous—really quite divine "eyrie" of Cernitoio, over against Vallombrosa, a dream of Tuscan loveliness and a really admirable séjour. . . . I spent at the last two divine weeks in Venice—at the Barbaro. I don't care, frankly, if I never see the vulgarized Rome or Florence again, but Venice never seemed to me more loveable—though the vaporetto rages. They keep their cars at Mestre! and I am devotedly yours both,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Gwenllian Palgrave.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Aug. 27, 1907.

My dear Gwenllian Palgrave,

It is quite horrid for me to have to tell you (and after a little delay caused by a glut of correspondence, at once, and a pressure of other occupations) that your gentle appeal, on your friend's behalf, in the matter of the "favourite

quotation," finds me utterly helpless and embarrassed. The perverse collectress proposes, I fear, to collect the impossible! I haven't a favourite quotation—absolutely not: any more than I have a favourite day in the year, a favourite letter in the alphabet or a favourite wave in the sea! And the collectress, in general, has ever found me dark and dumb and odious, and I am too aged and obstinate and brutal to change! Such is the sorry tale I have to ask you all patiently to hear. I wish you were, or had been, coming over to see me from Canterbury—instead of labouring in that barren vineyard of other friendship. Do come without fail the next time you are there, and believe me your—and your sister's—very faithful even if very flowerless and leafless well-wisher from long ago,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William James.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 17th, 1907.

Dearest William,

. . . . I seem to have followed your summer rather well and intimately and rejoicingly, thanks to Bill's impartings up to the time he left me, and to the beautiful direct and copious news aforesaid from yourself and from Alice, and I make out that I may deem things well with you when I see you so mobile and mobilizable (so emancipated and unchained for being so,) as well as so fecund and so still overflowing. Your annual go at Keene Valley (which I'm never to have so much as beheld) and the nature of your references to it—as this one to-night—fill me with pangs and yearnings—I mean the bitterness, almost, of envy: there is so little of the Keene Valley side of things

in my life. But I went up to Scotland a month ago, for five days at John Cadwalader's (of N.Y.) vast "shooting" in Forfarshire (let to him out of Lord Dalhousie's real principality,) and there, in absolutely exquisite weather, had a brief but deep draught of the glory of moor and mountain, as that air, and ten-mile trudges through the heather and by the brae-side (to lunch with the shooters) delightfully give it. It was an exquisite experience. But those things are over, and I am "settled in" here, D.V., for a good quiet time of urgent work (during the season here that on the whole I love best, for it makes for concentration—and il n'y a que ça—for *me!*) which will float me, I trust, till the end of February; when I shall simply go up to London till the mid-May. No more "abroad" for me within any calculable time, heaven grant! Why the devil I didn't write to you after reading your *Pragmatism*—how I kept from it—I can't now explain save by the very fact of the spell itself (of interest and enthrallment) that the book cast upon me; I simply sank down, under it, into such depths of submission and assimilation that *any* reaction, very nearly, even that of acknowledgment, would have had almost the taint of dissent or escape. Then I was lost in the wonder of the extent to which all my life I have (like M. Jourdain) unconsciously pragmatized. You are immensely and universally *right*, and I have been absorbing a number more of your followings-up of the matter in the American (*Journal of Psychology?*) which your devouring devotee Manton Marble . . . plied, and always on invitation does ply, me with. I feel the reading of the book, at all events, to have been really the event of my summer. In which connection (that of "books"), I am infinitely touched by your speaking of having read parts

of my American Scene (of which I hope Bill has safely delivered you the copy of the English edition) to Mrs. Bryce—paying them the tribute of that test of their value. Indeed the tribute of your calling the whole thing “*köstlich stuff*” and saying it will remain to *be* read so and really gauged, gives me more pleasure than I can say, and quickens my regret and pain at the way the fates have been all against (all finally and definitely now) my having been able to carry out my plan and do a second instalment, embodying more and complementary impressions. Of course I *had* a plan—and the second vol. would have attacked the subject (and my general mass of impression) at various *other* angles, thrown off various other pictures, in short *contributed* much more. But the thing was not to be. . . .

But I am writing on far into the dead unhappy night, while the rain is on the roof—and the wind in the chimneys. Oh your windless (gateless) Cambridge! *Choyez-le!* Tell Alice that all this is “for her too,” but she shall also soon hear further from yours and hers all and always,  
HENRY.

*To W. E. Norris.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
December 23rd, 1907.

My dear Norris,

I want you to find this, as by ancient and inviolate custom, or at least intention, on your table on Christmas a.m.; but am convinced that, whenever I post it, it will reach you either before or after, and not with true dramatic effect. It will take you in any case, however, the assurance of my affectionate fidelity—little as anything else for the past year, or I fear a longer time, may have contributed to your



perception of that remembrance. The years and the months go, and somehow make our meetings ingeniously rarer and our intervals and silences more monstrous. It is the effect, alas, of our being as it were antipodal Provincials—for even if one of us were a Capitalist the problem (of occasional common days in London) would be by so much simplified. I am in London less, on the whole (than during my first years in this place;) and as you appear now to be there never, I flap my wings and crane my neck in the void. Last spring, I confess, I committed an act of comprehensive disloyalty; I went abroad at the winter's end and remained till the first days of July (the first half of the time in Paris, roughly speaking—and on a long and very interesting, *extraordinarily* interesting, motor-tour in France; the second in Rome and Venice, as to take leave of *them* forever.) This took London almost utterly out of my year, and I think I heard from Gosse, who happily for him misses you so much less than I do, (I mean enjoys you so much more—but no, that isn't right either!) that you had in May or June shone in the eye of London. I am not this year, however, I thank my stars, to repeat the weird exploit of a "long continental absence"—such things have quite ceased to be in my real *mœurs*—and I shall therefore plan a campaign in town (for May and June) that will have for its leading feature to encounter you somewhere and somehow. Till then—that is to a later date than usual—I expect to bide quietly here, where a continuity of occupation—strange to say—causes the days and the months to melt in my grasp, and where, in spite of rather an appalling invasion of outsiders and idlers (a spreading colony and a looming menace,) the conditions of life declare themselves as emphatically my rustic "fit" as I ten years ago

made them out to be. I have lived *into* my little house and garden so thoroughly that they have become a kind of domiciliary skin, that can't be peeled off without pain—and in fact to go away at all is to have, rather, the sense of being flayed. Nevertheless I was glad, last spring, to have been tricked, rather, into a violent change of manners and practices—violent partly because my ten weeks in Paris were, for me, on a basis most unprecedented: I paid a *visit* of that monstrous length to friends (I had never done so in my life before,) and in a beautiful old house in the heart of the Rive Gauche, amid old private hotels and hidden gardens (Rue de Varenne), tasted socially and associatively, so to speak, of a new Paris altogether and got a bellyful of fresh and nutritive impressions. Yet I have just declined a repetition of it inexorably, and it's more and more vivid to me that I have as much as I can tackle to lead my own life—I can't *ever* again attempt, for more than the fleeting hour, to lead other people's. (I have indeed, I should add, suffered infiltration of the poison of the motor—contemplatively and touringly used: that, truly, is a huge extension of life, of experience and consciousness. But I thank my stars that I'm too poor to have one.) I'm afraid I've no other adventure to regale you with. I am engaged, none the less, in a perpetual adventure, the most thrilling and in every way the greatest of my life, and which consists of having more than four years entered into a state of health so altogether better than I had ever known that my whole consciousness is transformed by the intense *alleviation* of it, and I lose much time in pinching myself to see if this be not, really, "none of I." That fact, however, is much more interesting to myself than to other people—partly because no one but myself was ever aware

of the unhappy nature of the physical consciousness from which I have been redeemed. It may give a glimmering sense of the degree of the redemption, however, that I should, in the first place, be willing to fly in the face of the jealous gods by so blatant a proclamation of it, and in the second, find the value of it still outweigh the formidable, the heaped-up and pressed together burden of my years.

But enough of my own otherwise meagre annals. . . . I must catch my post. I haven't sounded you for the least news of your own—it being needless to tell you that I hold out my cap for it even as an organ-grinder who makes eyes for pence to a gentleman on a balcony: especially when the balcony overhangs your luxuriant happy valley and your turquoise sea. I go on taking immense comfort in the "Second Home," as I beg your pardon for calling it, that your sister and her husband must make for you, and am almost as presumptuously pleased with it as if I had invented it. I am myself literally eating a baked apple and a biscuit on Xmas evening all alone: I have no one in the house, I never dine out here under *any* colour (there are to be found people who do!) and I have been deaf to the syren voice of Paris, and to other gregarious pressure. But I wish you a brave feast and a blameless year and am yours, my dear Norris, all faithfully and fondly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To W. E. Norris.*

H. J. had inadvertently addressed the preceding letter to 'E. W. Norris Esq.'

Lamb House, Rye.  
December 26 : 1907.

My dear Norris,

It came over me in the oddest way, weirdly and dimly, as I lay soaking in my hot bath an hour ago, that my jaded and inadvertent hand (I have written so many letters in so few days, and you see the effect on everyone doubtless but your own impeccably fingered self) subscribed my Xmas envelope with the monstrous collocation "E.W."! The effect has been probably to make you think the letter a circular and chuck it into the fire—or, if you *have* opened it, to convince you that my handsome picture of my "health" is true—if true at all—of my digestion and other vulgar parts, at the expense of my brain. Clearly you must believe me in distinct cerebral decline. Yet I'm not, I am only—or was—in a state of purely and momentarily *manual* muddle. But the curious and interesting thing is: Why, suddenly, as I lay this cold morning agreeably *steaming*, did the vision of the hind-part-before order come straight *at* me out of the vapours, after three or four days, when I didn't know I was thinking of you?

Well, it only shows how much you are, my dear Norris, in the thoughts of yours remorsefully,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I hope, now, I *did* do it after all!

*To Dr. and Mrs. J. William White.*

H. J. had enjoyed the hospitality of these friends at Philadelphia, during his last visit to America.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Jan. 1, 1908.

Dear William and Letitia !

It would be monstrous of me to say that what I most valued in William's last brave letter was Letitia's gentle "drag" upon it; and I hasten to insist that when I dwell on the pleasure so produced by Letitia's *presence in it* (to the extent of her gently "dragging") I feel that she at least will know perfectly what I mean! Explain this to William, my dear Letitia: I leave all the burden to *you*—so used as you are to burdens! It was delightful, I *can* honestly say, to hear from you no long time since—and whether by controlled or uncontrolled inspiration; and I tick a small space clear this morning—clear in an air fairly black with the correspondence "of the season"—just to focus you fondly in it and make, for the friendly sound of my Remington, a penetrable medium and a straight course. I am shut up, as mostly, you see, in the little stronghold your assault of which has never lost you honour, at least—I mean the honour of the brave besieger—however little else it may have brought you; and I waggle this small white flag at you, from my safe distance, over the battlements, as for a cheerful truce or amicable New Year's parley. I think I must figure to you a good deal as a "banked-in" Esquimau with his head alone extruding through the sole orifice of his hut, or perhaps as a Digger Indian, bursting through his mound, by the same perforation, even as a chicken through

its shell: by reason of the abject immobility practised by me while you and Letitia hurl yourselves from one ecstasy of movement, one form of exercise, one style of saddled or harnessed or milked or prodded or perhaps merely "fattened," quadruped, to another. Your letter—this last—is a noble picture of a free quadrupedal life—which gives me the sense, all delightful, of seeing you both *alone* erect and nimble and graceful in the midst of the browsing herd of your subjects. Well, it all sounds delightfully pastoral to one whose "stable" consists but of the go-cart in which the gardener brings up the luggage of those of my visitors (from the station) who advance successfully to the *stage* of that question of transport; and my outhouses of the shed under which my solitary henchman (but sufficient to a drawbridge that plays so easily up!) "attends to the boots" of those confronted with the inevitable subsequent phase of early matutinal departure! All of which means, dear both of you, that I do seem to read into your rich record the happiest evidences of health as well as of wealth. You take my breath away—as, for that matter, you can but too easily figure with your ever-natural image of me gaping through a crevice of my door!—the only other at all equal loss of it proceeding but from my mild daily revolution up and down our little local eminence here. No, you won't believe it—that these have been my only revolutions since I last risked, at a loophole, seeing you thunder past. I shall risk it again when you thunder back—and really, though it spoils the consistency of my builded metaphor, watch fondly for the charming flash that will precede, and prepare! I haven't been even as far as to see the good Abbeyes at Fairford—was capable of not even sparing that encouragement when

she kindly wrote to me for a visit toward the autumn's end. I haven't so much as pilgrimised to the other shrine in Tite St.—and, having so little to tell you, really mustn't prolong this record of my vacancy. I am quite spending the winter here—"bracing" for what the spring and summer may bring. But I do get, as the very breath of the Spice-islands, the balmy side-wind of your general luxuriance, and it makes me glad and grateful for you, and keeps me just as much as ever your faithful, vigilant, steady, sturdy friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

The work just finished was the revision of *The High Bid*, shortly to be produced by Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Robertson.

Lamb House, Rye.  
January 2nd, 1908.

My dear Edith,

G. T. Lapsley has gone to bed—he has been seeing the New Year in with me (generously giving a couple of days to it)—and I snatch this hour from out the blizzard of Xmas and Year's End and New Year's Beginning missives, to tell you too belatedly how touched I have been with your charming little Xmas memento—an exquisite and interesting piece for which I have found a very effective position on the little old oak-wainscotted wall of my very own room. There it will hang as a fond reminder of tout ce que je vous dois. (I am trying to make use of an accursed "fountain" pen—but it's a vain struggle; it beats me, and I recur to this familiar and well-worn old unimproved utensil.) I have passed here a very solitary and *casanier* Christmas-tide (of wondrous still and frosty days, and

nights of huge silver stars,) and yesterday finished a job of the last urgency for which this intense concentration had been all vitally indispensable. I got the conditions, here at home thus, in perfection—I put my job through, and now—or in time—it may have, on my scant fortunes, a far-reaching effect. If it does have, you'll be the first all generously to congratulate me, and to understand why, under the stress of it, I couldn't indeed break my little started spell of application by a frolic absence from my field of action. If it, on the contrary, fails of that influence I offer my breast to the acutest of your silver arrows; though the beautiful charity with which you have drawn from your critical quiver nothing more fatally-feathered than that dear little framed and glazed, squared and gilded *étrenne* serves for me as a kind of omen of my going unscathed to the end. . . . I admit that it's horrible that we can't—*nous autres*—talk more face to face of the other phenomena; but life is terrible, tragic, perverse and abysmal—besides, *patientons*. I can't pretend to speak of the phenomena that are now renewing themselves round you; for *there* is the eternal penalty of my having shared your cup last year—that I must *taste* the liquor or go without—there can be no question of my otherwise handling the cup. Ah I'm conscious enough, I assure you, of going without, and of all the rich arrears that will never—for me—be made up—! But I hope for yourselves a thoroughly good and full experience—about the possibilities of which, as I see them, there is, alas, all too much to say. Let me therefore but wonder and wish! . . . But it's long past midnight, and I am yours and Teddy's ever so affectionate

HENRY JAMES.



*To Gaillard T. Lapsley.*

Reform Club,  
Pall Mall, S.W.  
March 17th, 1908.

My dear, dear Gaillard !

I can't tell you with what tender sympathy your rather disconcerting little news inspires me nor how my heart goes out to you. Alack, alack, how we do have to pay for things—and for our virtues and grandeurs and beauties (even as you are now doing, overworked hero and model of distinguished valour,) as well as for our follies and mistakes. However, you *have* on your record exactly that mistake of too generous a sacrifice. Fortunately you have been pulled up before you have quite chucked away your all. It must be deuced dreary—yet if you ask me whether I think of you more willingly and enduringly *thus*, or as your image of pale overstrain haunted me after you had left me at the New Year, I shall have no difficulty in replying. In fact, dearest Gaillard, and at the risk of aggravating you, I *like* to keep you a little before me in the passive, the recumbent, the luxurious and ministered-to posture, and my imagination rings all the possible changes on the forms of your noble surrender. Lie as *flat* as you can, and live and think and feel and talk (and keep silent!) as idly—and you will thereby be laying up the most precious treasure. It's a heaven-appointed interlude, and *cela ne tient qu'à vous* (I mean to the wave of your white hand) to let it become a thing of beauty like the masque of *Comus*. *Cultivate*, horizontally, the waving of that hand—and you will brush away, for the time, all responsibilities and superstitions, and the peace of the Lord will descend upon you, and

you will become as one of the most promising little good boys that ever was. Après quoi the whole process and experience will grow interesting, amusing, tissue-making (history-making,) to you, and you will, after you get well, feel it to have been the time of your life which you'd have been most sorry to miss. Some five years ago—or more—a very interesting young friend of mine, Paul Harvey (then in the War Office as Private Sec. to Lord Lansdowne), was taken exactly as you are, and stopped off just as you are and consigned exactly to your place, I think—or rather no, to a pseudo-Nordrach in the Mendips. I remember how I sat on just such a morning as this at this very table and in this very seat and wrote him on this very paper in the very sense in which I am no less confidently writing to you—urging him to let himself utterly go and cultivate the day-to-day and the hand-to-mouth and the questions-be-damned, even as an exquisite fine art. Well, it absolutely and directly and beautifully worked: he *recula*—to the very limit—pour mieux sauter, and has since *sauté'd* so well that his career has caught him up again, . . . Your case will have gone practically quite on all fours with this. I am drenching you with my fond eloquence—but what will you have when you have touched me so by writing me so charmingly out of your quiet—though ever so shining, I feel—little chamber in the great Temple of Simplification? I shall return to the charge—if it be allowed me—and perhaps some small sign from you I shall have after a while again. I came up from L.H. yesterday only—and shall be in town after this a good deal, D.V., through the rest of this month and April and May. At some stage of your *mouvement ascensionnel* I shall see you—for I hope they won't be sending you up quite to

Alpine Heights. Take it from me, dear, dear G., that your cure will have a social iridescence, for your acute and ironic and genial observation, of the most beguiling kind. But you don't need to "take" that or any other wisdom that your beautiful intelligence now plays with from any other source but that intelligence; therefore be beholden to me almost only for the fresh reassurance that I am more affectionately than ever yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

The first performance of *The High Bid* took place in Edinburgh three days after the date of the following.

Roxburghe Hotel, Edinburgh.  
March 23rd, 1908.

My dear Edith!

This is just a tremulous little line to say to you that the daily services of intercession and propitiation (to the infernal gods, those of jealousy and *guignon*) that I feel sure you have instituted for me will continue to be deeply appreciated. They have already borne fruit in the shape of a desperate (comparative) calm—in my racked breast—after much agitation—and even to-day (Sunday) of a feverish gaiety during the journey from Manchester, to this place, achieved an hour ago by special train for my whole troupe and its impedimenta—I travelling with the animals like the lion-tamer or the serpent-charmer in person and quite enjoying the caravan-quality, the bariolé Bohemian or *picaresque* note of the affair. Here we are for the last desperate throes—but the omens are good, the little play pretty and pleasing and amusing and orthodox and mercenary and *safe* (*absit omen!*)—cravenly, ignobly *canny*: also clearly to be very decently

acted indeed: little Gertrude Elliott, on whom it so infinitely hangs, showing above all a gallantry, capacity and *vaillance*, on which I had not ventured to build. She is a scrap (personally, physically) where she should be a presence, and handicapped by a face too *small* in size to be a field for the play of expression; but allowing for this she illustrates the fact that intelligence and instinct are capables de tout—so that I still hope. And each time they worry through the little “piggery” it seems to me more firm and more intrinsically without holes and weak spots—in itself I mean; and not other, in short, than “consummately” artful. I even quite awfully wish you and Teddy were to be here—even so far as that do I go! But wire me a word—*here*—on Thursday a.m.—and I shall be almost as much heartened up. I will send you as plain and unvarnished a one after the event as the case will lend itself to. Even an Edinburgh public isn’t (I mean as we go here all by the London) determinant, of course—however, *à la guerre comme à la guerre*, and don’t intermit the burnt-offerings. More, more, very soon—and you too will have news for yours and Edward’s right recklessly even though ruefully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Henry James, junior.*

105 Pall Mall, S.W.

April 3rd, 1908.

Dearest Harry,

. . . The Nightmare of the Edition (of my Works!) is the real *mot de l’Enigme* of all my long gaps and delinquencies these many months past—my terror of not keeping sufficiently ahead in doing my part of it (all the revising, rewriting,

retouching, Preface-making and proof-correcting) has so paralysed me—as a panic fear—that I have let other decencies go to the wall. The printers and publishers tread on my heels, and I feel their hot breath behind me—whereby I keep *at* it in order not to be overtaken. Fortunately I have kept at it so that I am almost out of the wood, and the next very few weeks or so will completely lay the spectre. The case has been complicated badly, moreover, the last month—and even before—by my having, of all things in the world, let myself be drawn into a theatrical adventure—which fortunately appears to have turned out as well as I could have possibly expected or desired. Forbes Robertson and his wife produced on the 26th last in Edinburgh—being on “tour,” and the provincial production to begin with, as more experimental, having good reason in its favour—a three-act comedy of mine (“The High Bid”)—which is just only the little one-act play presented as a “tale” at the end of the volume of the “Two Magics”; the one-act play proving really a perfect three-act one, dividing itself (by two *short* entractes, without fiddles) perfectly at the right little places as climaxes—with the artful beauty of unity of time and place preserved, etc. . . . It had a *great* and charming success before a big house at Edinburgh—a real and unmistakable victory—but what was most brought home thereby is that it should have been discharged straight in the face of London. That will be its real and best function. This I am hoping for during May and June. It has still to be done at Newcastle, Liverpool, etc. (was done this past week three times at Glasgow. Of course on tour three times in a week is the most they can give a play in a minor city.) But my great point is that preparations, rehearsals,

*lavishments* of anxious time over it (after completely re-writing it and improving it to begin with) have represented a sacrifice of days and weeks to them that have direfully devoured my scant margin—thus making my intense nervousness (about them) doubly nervous. I left home on the 17th last and rehearsed hard (every blessed day) at Manchester, and at Edinburgh till the production—having already, three weeks before that in London, given up a whole week to the same. I came back to town a week ago to-night (saw a second night in Edinburgh, which confirmed the impression of the first,) and return to L.H. to-morrow, after a very decent *huitaine de jours* here during which I have had quiet mornings, and even evenings, of work. I go to Paris about the 20th to stay 10 days, at the most, with Mrs Wharton, and shall be back by May 1st. I yearn to know positively that your Dad and Mother arrive definitely on the Oxford job then. I have had to be horribly inhuman to them in respect to the fond or repeated *expression* of that yearning—but they will more than understand why, “druv” as I’ve been, and also understand how the prospect of having them with me, and being with them, for a while, has been all these last months as the immediate jewel of my spur. Read them this letter and let it convey to them, all tenderly, that I *live* in the hope of their operative advent, and shall bleed half to death if there be any hitch. . . . But I embrace you all in spirit and am ever your fond old Uncle,

HENRY JAMES.

*To W. D. Howells.*

The "lucubrations" are of course the prefaces written for the collected edition. The number of volumes was eventually raised to twenty-four, but *The Bostonians* was not included. The "one thing" referred to, towards the end of this letter, as likely to involve another visit to America would seem to be the possible production there of one of his plays; while the further reason for wishing to return was doubtless connected with his project of writing a novel of which the scene was to be laid in America—the novel that finally became *The Ivory Tower*.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

17th August, 1908.

My dear Howells,

A great pleasure to me is your good and generous letter just received—with its luxurious implied licence for me of seeking this aid to prompt response; at a time when a pressure of complications (this is the complicated time of the year even in my small green garden) defeats too much and too often the genial impulse. But so far as compunction started and guided your pen, I really rub my eyes for vision of where it may—save as most misguidedly—have come in. You were so far from having distilled any indigestible drop for me on that pleasant *ultimissimo* Sunday, that I parted from you with a taste, in my mouth, absolutely saccharine—sated with sweetness, or with sweet reasonableness, so to speak; and aching, or wincing, in no single fibre. Extravagant and licentious, almost, your delicacy of fear of the contrary; so much so, in fact, that I didn't remember we had even spoken of the heavy lucubrations in question, or that you had had any time or opportunity, since their "inception," to look at one. However your fond mistake is all to the good, since it has

brought me your charming letter and so appreciative remarks you therein make. My actual attitude about the Lucubrations is almost only, and quite inevitably, that they make, to me, for weariness; by reason of their number and extent—I've now but a couple more to write. This staleness of sensibility, in connection with them, blocks out for the hour every aspect but that of their being all done, and of their perhaps helping the Edition to sell two or three copies more! They will have represented much labour to this latter end—though in that they will have differed indeed from no other of their fellow-manifestations (in general) whatever; and the resemblance will be even increased if the two or three copies *don't*, in the form of an extra figure or two, mingle with my withered laurels. They are, in general, a sort of plea for Criticism, for Discrimination, for Appreciation on other than infantile lines—as against the so almost universal Anglo-Saxon absence of these things; which tends so, in our general trade, it seems to me, to break the heart. However, I am afraid I'm too sick of the mere doing of them, and of the general strain of the effort to avoid the deadly danger of repetition, to say much to the purpose about them. They ought, collected together, none the less, to form a sort of comprehensive manual or *vade-mecum* for aspirants in our arduous profession. Still, it will be long before I shall want to collect them together for that purpose and furnish *them* with a final Preface. I've done with prefaces for ever. As for the Edition itself, it has racked me a little that I've had to leave out so many things that would have helped to make for rather a more vivid completeness. I don't at all regret the things, pretty numerous, that I've omitted from deep-seated preference and design; but I



do a little those that are crowded out by want of space and by the rigour of the 23 vols., and 23 only, which were the condition of my being able to arrange the matter with the Scribners at all. Twenty-three do seem a fairly blatant array—and yet I rather surmise that there may have to be a couple of supplementary volumes for certain too marked omissions; such being, on the whole, detrimental to an at all professedly comprehensive presentation of one's stuff. Only these, I pray God, without Prefaces! And I have even, in addition, a dim vague view of re-introducing, with a good deal of titivation and cancellation, the too-diffuse but, I somehow feel, tolerably full and good "Bostonians" of nearly a quarter of a century ago; that production never having, even to my much-disciplined patience, received any sort of justice. But it will take, doubtless, a great deal of artful re-doing—and I haven't, now, had the courage or time for anything so formidable as touching and re-touching it. I feel at the same time how the series suffers commercially from its having been dropped so completely out. *Basta pure—basta!*

I am charmed to hear of your Roman book and beg you very kindly to send it me directly it bounds into the ring. I rejoice, moreover, with much envy, and also a certain yearning and impotent non-intelligence, at your being moved to-day to Roman utterance—I mean in presence of the so bedrenched and vulgarised (I mean more particularly *commonised*) and transformed City (as well as, alas, more or less, Suburbs) of our current time. There was nothing, I felt, to myself, I could *less* do than write again, in the whole presence—when I was there some fifteen months ago. The idea of doing so (even had any periodical wanted my stuff, much

less bid for it) would have affected me as a sort of give-away of my ancient and other reactions in presence of all the unutterable old Rome I originally found and adored. It would have come over me that if those ancient emotions of my own meant anything, no others on the new basis could mean much; or if any on the new basis should pretend to sense, it would be at the cost of all imputable coherency and sincerity on the part of my prime infatuation. In spite, all the same, of which doubtless too pedantic view—it only means, I fear, that I am, to my great disadvantage, utterly bereft of any convenient journalistic ease—I am just beginning to re-do . . . certain little old Italian papers, with titivations and expansions, in form to match with a volume of “English Hours” re-fabricated three or four years ago on the same system. In this little job I shall meet again my not much more than scant, yet still appreciable, old Roman stuff in my path—and shall have to commit myself about it, or about its general subject, somehow, or other. I shall trick it out again to my best ability, at any rate—and to the cost, I fear, of your thinking I have re-titivation on the brain. I haven’t—I only have it on (to the end that I may then have it a little consequently *in*) the flat pocket-book. The system has succeeded a little with “English Hours”; which have sold quite vulgarly—for wares of mine; whereas the previous and original untitivated had long since dropped almost to nothing. In spite of which I could really shed salt tears of impatience and yearning to get back, after so prolonged a blocking of traffic, to too dreadfully postponed and neglected “creative” work; an accumulated store of ideas and reachings-out for which even now clogs my brain.

We are having here so bland and beautiful a summer that when I receive the waft of your furnace-mouth, blown upon my breakfast-table every few days through the cornucopia, or improvised resounding trumpet, of the Times, I groan across at my brother William (now happily domesticated with me :) "Ah why *did* they, poor infatuated dears? why *did* they?"—and he always knows I mean Why did you three hie you home from one of the most beautiful seasons of splendid cool summer, or splendid summery cool, that ever was, just to swoon in the arms of your Kittery *genius loci* (genius of perspiration!)—to whose terrific embrace you saw me four years ago, or whatever terrible time it was, almost utterly succumb. In my small green garden here the elements have been, ever since you left, quite enchantingly mixed; and I have been quite happy and proud to show my brother and his wife and two of his children, who have been more or less collectively and individually with me, what a decent English season can be. . . .

Let me thank you again for your allusion to the slightly glamour-tinged, but more completely and consistently forbidding and forbidden, lecture possibility. I refer to it in these terms because in the first place I shouldn't have waited till now for it, but should have waked up to it eleven years ago; and because in the second there are other, and really stouter things too, definite ones, I want to do, with which it would formidably interfere, and which are better worth my resolutely attempting. I never have had such a sense of almost bursting, late in the day though it be, with violent and lately too much repressed creative (again!) intention. I *may* burst before this intention fairly or completely flowers, of course; but in that case, even, I shall probably

explode to a less distressing effect than I should do, under stress of a fatal puncture, on the too personally and physically arduous, and above all too gregariously-assaulted (which is what makes it most arduous) lecture-platform. There is one thing which may conceivably (if it comes within a couple of years) take me again to the *contorni* of Kittery; and on the spot, once more, one doesn't know what might happen. *Then* I should take grateful counsel of you with all the appreciation in the world. And I *want* very much to go back for a certain thoroughly practical and special "artistic" reason; which would depend, however, on my being able to pass my time in an ideal combination of freedom and quiet, rather than in a luridly real one of involved and exasperated exposure and motion. But I may still have to talk to you of this more categorically; and won't worry you with it till then. You wring my heart with your report of your collective Dental pilgrimage to Boston in Mrs Howells' distressful interest. I read of it from your page, somehow, as I read of Siberian or Armenian or Macedonian monstrosities, through a merciful attenuating veil of Distance and Difference, in a column of the Times. The distance is half the globe—and the difference (for me, from the dear lady's active afflictedness) that of having when in America undergone, myself, so prolonged and elaborate a torture, in the Chair of Anguish, that I am now on t'other side of Jordan altogether, with every ghost, even, of a wincing nerve extinct and a horrible inhuman acheless void installed as a substitute. Void or not, however, I hope Mrs Howells, and you all, are now acheless at least, and am yours, my dear Howells, ever so faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. With all of which I catch myself up on not having told you, decently and gratefully, of the always sympathetic attention with which I have read the "Fennel and Rue" you so gracefully dropped into my lap at that last hour, and which I had afterwards to toy with a little distractedly before getting the right peaceful moments and right retrospective mood (this in order to remount the stream of time to the very Fontaine de Jouvence of your subject-matter) down here. For what comes out of it to me more than anything else is the charming freshness of it, and the general miracle of your being capable of this under the supposedly more or less heavy bloom of a rich maturity. There are places in it in which you recover, absolutely, your first fine rapture. You confound and dazzle me; so go on recovering—it will make each of your next things a new document on immortal freshness! I can't remount—but can only drift on with the thicker and darker tide: wherefore pray for me, as who knows what may be at the end?

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 13th, 1908.

My very dear Friend,

I cabled you an hour ago my earnest hope that you *may* see your way to sailing . . . on the 20th—and if you *do* manage that, this won't catch you before you start. Nevertheless I can't not write to you—however briefly (I mean on the chance of my letter being useless)—after receiving your two last, of *rapprochées* dates, which have come within a very few days of each other—that of Oct. 5th only to-day. I am deeply distressed at the situation you describe and as to which my power to suggest or enlighten

now quite miserably fails me. I move in darkness; I rack my brain; I gnash my teeth; I don't pretend to understand or to imagine. . . . Only sit tight yourself *and go through the movements of life*. That keeps up our connection with life—I mean of the immediate and apparent life; behind which, all the while, the deeper and darker and unapparent, in which things *really* happen to us, learns, under that hygiene, to stay in its place. Let it get out of its place and it swamps the scene; besides which its place, God knows, is enough for it! Live it all through, every inch of it—out of it something valuable will come—but live it ever so quietly; and—*je maintiens mon dire*—waitingly! . . . What I am really hoping is that you'll be on your voyage when this reaches the Mount. If you're not, you'll be so very soon afterwards, won't you?—and you'll come down and see me here and we'll talk *à perte de vue*, and there will be something in that for both of us. . . . Believe meanwhile and always in the aboundingly tender friendship—the understanding, the participation, the *princely* (though I say it who shouldn't) hospitality of spirit and soul of yours more than ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To J. B. Pinker.*

By this time the monthly issue of the volumes of the "New York" edition was well under way—with the discouraging results to be inferred from the following letter.

Lamb House, Rye.

October 23rd, 1908.

My dear Pinker,

All thanks for your letter this a.m. received. I have picked myself up considerably since Tuesday a.m., the hour of the shock, but I think it would ease off my nerves not a little to see you,

and should be glad if you could come down on Monday next, 26th, say—by the 4.25, and dine and spend the night. If Monday *isn't* convenient to you, I must wait to indicate some other near subsequent day till I have heard from a person who is to come down on one of those dates and whom I wish to be free of. I am afraid my anticlimax *has* come from the fact that since the publication of the Series began no dimmest light or “lead” as to its actualities or possibilities of profit has reached me—whereby, in the absence of special warning, I found myself concluding in the sense of some probable fair return—beguiled thereto also by the measure, known only to myself, of the treasures of ingenuity and labour I have lavished on the ameliorations of every page of the thing, and as to which I felt that they couldn't *not* somehow “tell.” I warned *myself* indeed, and kept down my hopes—said to myself that any present payments would be moderate and fragmentary—very; but this didn't prevent my rather building on something that at the end of a very frequented and invaded and hospitable summer might make such a difference as would outweigh—a little—my so disconcerting failure to get anything from ——. The non-response of *both* sources has left me rather high and dry—though not so much so as when I first read Scribner's letter. I have recovered the perspective and proportion of things—I have committed, thank God, no anticipatory *follies* (the worst is having made out my income-tax return at a distinctly higher than at all warranted figure!—whereby I shall have early in 1909 to pay—as I even did last year—on parts of an income I have never received!)—and, above all, am aching in every bone to get back to out-and-out “creative” work, the long interruption of which has fairly sickened and

poisoned me. (*That* is the real hitch!) I am afraid that moreover in my stupidity before those unexplained—though so grim-looking!—figure-lists of Scribner's I even seemed to make out that a certain \$211 (a phrase in his letter seeming also to point to that interpretation) *is*, all the same, owing me. But as you say nothing about this I see that I am probably again deluded and that the mystic screed meant it is still owing *them*! Which is all that is wanted, verily, to my sad rectification! However, I am now, as it were, prepared for the worst, and as soon as I can get my desk *absolutely* clear (for, like the convolutions of a vast smothering boa-constrictor, such voluminosities of Proof—of the Edition—to be carefully read—still keep rolling in,) that mere fact will by itself considerably relieve me. And I have *such* visions and arrears of inspiration—! But of these we will speak—and, as I say, I shall be very glad if you can come Monday. Believe me, yours ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Ellen Emmet.*

H. J.'s interest in the work of this "paintress-cousin" (afterwards Mrs. Blanchard Rand) has already appeared in a letter to her mother, Mrs. George Hunter (vol. i, p. 265).

Lamb House, Rye.

November 2d, 1908.

. . . I have taken moments, beloved Bay, to weep, yes to bedew my pillow with tears, over the foul wrong I was doing *you* and the generous and delightful letter I so long ago had from you—and in respect to whose noble bounty your present letter, received only this evening and already moving me to this feverish response, is a heaping, on my unworthy head, of coals of fire. It is delightful at any rate, dearest Bay,



to be in relation with you again, and to hear your sweet voice, as it were, and to smell your glorious paint and turpentine—to inhale, in a word, both your goodness and your glory; and I shall never again consent to be deprived of the luxury of you (long enough to notice it) on any terms whatever. . . .

*November 3d.* I had to break off last night and go to bed—and as it is now much past mid-night again I shall almost surely not finish, but only scrawl you a few lines more and then take you up to London with me and go on with you there, as I am obliged to make that move, for a few days, by the 9.30 a.m. Among the things I have to do is to go to see my portrait by Jacques Blanche at the Private View of the New Gallery autumn show—he having “done” me in Paris last May (he is now quite the Bay Emmet of the London—in particular—portrait world, and does all the billionaires and such like: that’s where *I* come in—very big and fat and uncanny and “brainy” and awful when I last saw myself—so that I now quite tremble at the prospect, though he has done a rather wondrous thing of Thomas Hardy—who, however, lends himself. I will add a word to this after I have been to the N.G., and if I *am* as unnatural as I fear, you must settle, really, to come out and avenge me.) . . . When you see William, to get on again with *his* portrait—in which I am infinitely and yearningly interested—as I am in every invisible stroke of your brush, over which I ache for baffled curiosity or wonderment—when you *do* go on to Cambridge (sooner, I trust, than later) he and Alice and Peggy will have much to tell you about their quite long summer here, lately brought to a close, and about poor little old Lamb House and its corpulent, slowly-circulating and slowly-masticating master.

It was an infinite interest to have them here for a good many weeks—they are such endlessly interesting people, and Alice such a heroine of devotion and of everything. We have had a wondrous season—a real golden one, for weeks and weeks—and still it goes on, bland and breathless and changeless—the rarest autumn (and summer, from June on) known for years : a proof of what this much-abused climate is capable of for benignity and convenience. Dear little old Lamb House and garden have really become very pleasant and developed through being much (and virtuously) lived in, and I do wish you would come out and add another flourish to its happy sequel. But I *must* go to bed, dearest Bay—I'm ashamed to tell you what sort of hour it is. But I've not done with you yet.

105 *Pall Mall*. November 6th. I've been in town a couple of days without having a moment to return to this—for the London tangle immediately begins. What it will perhaps most interest you to know is that I "attended" yesterday the Private View of the Society of Portrait Painters' Exhibition and saw Blanche's "big" portrait of poor H. J. (His two exhibits are that one and one of himself—the latter very flattered, the former not.) The "funny thing about it" is that whereas I sat in almost full face, and left it on the canvas in that bloated aspect when I quitted Paris in June, it is now a splendid Profile, and with the body (and *more* of the body) in a quite different attitude; a wonderful *tour de force* (the sort of thing *you* ought to do if you understand your real interest!)—consisting of course of his having begun the whole thing afresh on a new canvas after I had gone, and worked out the profile, in my absence, by the aid of fond memory ("secret notes")

on my silhouette, he also says, surreptitiously taken by him) and several photographs (also secretly) taken at that angle while I sat there with my whole beauty, as I supposed, turned on. The result is wonderfully "fine" (for *me*)—*considering!* I think one sees a little that it's a *chic'd* thing, but ever so much less than you'd have supposed. He dines with me to-night and I will get him to give me two or three photographs (of the picture, not of *me*) and send them to you, for curiosity's sake. But I really think that (for a certain *style*—of presentation of H. J.—that it has, a certain dignity of intention and of indication—of who and what, poor creature, he *is!*) it ought to be seen in the U.S. He (Blanche) wants to go there himself—so put in all your own triumphs first. However, it would *kill* him—so his triumphs would be brief; and yours would then begin again. Meanwhile he was almost as agreeable and charming and beguiling to sit to, as *you*, dear Bay, in your own attaching person—which somebody once remarked to me explained *half* the "run" on you! . . . Dear Gaillard Lapsley (I hope immensely you'll see *him* on his way to Colorado or wherever) has given me occasional news of Eleanor and Elizabeth—in which I have rejoiced—seeming to hear their nurseries ring with the echo of their prosperity. As they must now have children enough for them to take care of *each other* (haven't they?) I hope they are thinking of profiting by it to come out here again—where they are greatly desired. . . . *But*, beloved Bay, I must get this off now. I send tenderest love to the Mother and the Sister; I beseech you not to let your waiting laurel, here, with ungathered, and am ever your fondest,

HENRY J. <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> your  
about

*To George Abbot James.*

This refers to the death of Mrs. G. A. James, sister of the Hon. H. Cabot Lodge, Senior Senator for Massachusetts. H. J.'s friendship with his correspondent, dating from early years, is commemorated in *Notes of a Son and Brother*.

Lamb House, Rye.  
Nov. 26th, 1908.

My dear old Friend,

Mrs. Lodge has written to me, and I have answered her letter, but I long very particularly to hold out my hand to you in person, and take your own and keep it a moment ever so tenderly and faithfully. All these months I haven't known of the blow that has descended on you, or I'm sure you feel that I would have made you some sign. My communications with Boston are few and faint in these days—though what I do hear has in general more or less the tragic note. You must have been through much darkness and living on now in a changed world. I hadn't seen her, you know, for long years, and as I have just said to Mrs. Lodge, always thought of her, or remembered her, as I saw her in youth—charming and young and bright, animated and eager, with life all before her. Great must be your alteration. I wonder about you and yet spend my wonder in vain, and somehow think we were meant not so to miss—during long years—sight and knowledge of each other. But life does strange and incalculable things with us all—life which I myself still find interesting. I have a hope that you do—in spite of everything. I wish I hadn't so awkwardly failed, practically, of seeing you when I was in America; gone, I should be better able to write to you by th

Make me some sign—wonderful above all

would be the sign that in great freedom you might come again at last to *these* regions of the earth. How I should hold out my hands to you! But perhaps you stick, as it were, to your past. . . . I don't *know*, you see, and I can only make you these uncertain, yet all affectionate motions. The best thing I can tell you about myself is that I have no second self to part with—having lived always deprived! But I've had other things, and may you still find you have—a few! Don't fail of feeling me at any rate, my dear George, ever so tenderly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Hugh Walpole.*

Lamb House, Rye.

December 13th, 1908.

My dear young friend Hugh Walpole,

I had from you some days ago a very kind and touching letter, which greatly charmed me, but which now that I wish to read it over again before belatedly thanking you for it I find I have stupidly and inexplicably mislaid—at any rate I can't to-night put my hand on it. But the extremely pleasant and interesting impression of it abides with me; I rejoice that you were moved to write it and that you didn't resist the generous movement—since I always find myself (when the rare and blest revelation—once in a blue moon—takes place) the happier for the thought that I enjoy the sympathy of the gallant and intelligent young. I shall send this to Arthur Benson with the request that he will kindly transmit it to you—since I fail thus, provokingly, of having your address before me. I gather that you are about

to hurl yourself into the deep sea of journalism—the more treacherous currents of which (and they strike me as numerous) I hope you may safely breast. Give me more news of this at some convenient hour, and let me believe that at some propitious one I may have the pleasure of seeing you. I never see A. C. B. in these days, to my loss and sorrow—and if this continues I shall have to depend on you considerably to give me tidings of him. However, my appeal to him (my only resource) to put you in possession of this will perhaps strike a welcome spark—so you see you are already something of a link. Believe me very truly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To George Abbot James.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Dec. 21st, 1908.

My dear dear George—

How I wish I might for a while be with you, or that you were here a little with me! I am deeply touched by your letter, which makes me feel all your desolation. Clearly you have lived for long years in a union so close and unbroken that what has happened is like a violent and unnatural mutilation and as if a part of your very self had been cut off, leaving you to go through the movements of life without it—movements for which it had become to you indispensable. Your case is rare and wonderful—the suppression of the *other* relations and complications and contacts of our common condition, for the most part—and such as no example of seems possible in *this* more infringing and insisting world, over here—which creates all sorts of *inevitable*s of life round about one; perhaps for props and crutches when the great

thing falls—perhaps rather toward making any one and absorbing relation less intense—I don't pretend to say! But you sound to me so lonely—and I wish I could read more human furniture, as it were, into your void. And I can't even speak as if I might plan for seeing you—or dream of it with any confidence. The roaring, rushing world seems to me myself—with its brutal and vulgar racket—all the while a less and less enticing place for moving about in—and I ask myself how one can think of your turning to it at this late hour, and after the long luxury, as it were, of your so united and protected independence. Still, what those we so love have done *for* us doesn't wholly fail us with their presence—isn't that true? and you are feeling it, at times, I'm sure, even while your ache is keenest. In fact their so making us ache is one way for us of their being with us, of our holding on to them after a fashion. But I talk, my dear George, for mere tenderness—and so I say vain words—with only the *fact* of my tenderness a small thing to touch you. I have known you from so far back—and your image is vivid and charming to me through everything—through everything. Things abide—*good* things—for that time: and we hold together even across the grey wintry sea, near which perhaps we both of us are tonight. I should have a lonely Christmas here were not a young nephew just come to me from his Oxford tutor's. You don't seem to have even that. But you have the affectionate thought of yours always,

HENRY JAMES.

To W. E. Norris.

Lamb House, Rye.

December 23rd, 1908.

My dear Norris,

I have immensely rejoiced to hear from you to-night, though I swear on my honour that that has nothing to do with this inveterate—isn't it?—and essentially pious pleasure, belonging to the date, of making you myself a sign. I have had the sad sense, for too long past, of being horrid, however (of never having acknowledged—at the psychological moment—your beautiful and interesting last;) and it has been for me as if I should get no more than my deserts were you to refuse altogether any more commerce with me. Your noble magnanimity lifting that shadow from my spirit, I perform *this* friendly function now, with a lighter heart and a restored confidence. Being horrid (in those ways,) none the less, seems to announce itself as my final doom and settled attitude: I grow horrider and horrider (as a correspondent) as I grow more aged and more obese, without at the same time finding that my social air clears itself as completely as those vices or disfigurements would seem properly to guarantee. Most of my friends and relatives are dead, and a due proportion of the others seem to be dying; in spite of which my daily prospect, these many months past, has bristled almost overwhelmingly with People, and to People more or less on the spot, or just off it, in motors (and preparing to be more than ever on it again,) or, most of all, haling me up to town for feverish and expensive dashes, in the name of damnable and more than questionable duties, interests, profits and pleasures—to such unaccountable and irrepressible



hordes, I say, I keep having to sacrifice heavily. The world, to my great inconvenience—that is the London aggregation of it—insists on treating me as suburban—which gives me thus the complication without my having any of the corresponding ease (if ease there be) of the state; and appalling is the immense incitement to that sort of invasion or expectation that the universal motor-use (hereabouts) compels one to reckon with. But this is a profitless groan—drawn from me by a particularly ravaged summer and autumn, as it happens—and at a season of existence and in general conditions in which one had fixed one's confidence on precious simplifications. A house and a little garden and a little possible hospitality, in a little supposedly picturesque place 60 miles from London, are, in short, stiff final facts that (in our more and more awful age) utterly decline to be simplified—and here I sit in the midst of them and exhale to you (to you almost only!) my helpless plaint. Fortunately, for the moment, I take the worst to be over. I've a young—a very young—American nephew who has come to me from his Oxford tutor to spend Xmas, and I have, in order to amuse him, engaged to go with him to-morrow and remain till Saturday with some friends six miles hence; but after that I cling to the vision of a great stretch of undevastated time here till April, or better still May, when I may go up to town for a month. Absorbing occupations—the only ones I really care for—await me in abysmal arrears—but I spare you my further overflow.

It has kept me really all this time from saying to you what I had infinitely more on my mind—how my sense of your Torquay life, with all that violent sadness, that great gust of extinction, breathed upon it, has kept you before me as a

subject of much affectionate speculation. Of course you've picked up your life after a fashion ; but we never pick up *all*—too much of it lies there broken and ended. But I seem to see you going on, as you're so gallantly capable of doing, in the manner of one for whom nothing more has happened than you were naturally prepared for in a world that you decently abstain from characterizing—and I congratulate you again on your mastery of the art of life—of the Torquay variety of it in particular. (We have to decide on the kind we will master—but I haven't mastered this kind !) I at any rate saw Gosse in town some three weeks ago, and he spoke of having seen you not long previous and of the excellent figure you made to him. (I didn't know you were there—but indeed a certain turmoil about me here—speaking as a man loving his own hours and his own company—must have been then, I think, at its thickest.) . . . I hope something or other pleasant has brushed you with its wing—and even that you've been able to put forth a quick hand and seize it. If so, keep tight hold of it—nurse it in your bosom—for 1909—and believe me, my dear Norris, yours always and ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Henry White.*

Mr. White was at this time American Ambassador in Paris.

Lamb House, Rye.  
Dec. 29, 1908.

Dearest Margaret White,

I sit here to-night, I quite crouch by my homely little fireside, muffled in soundless snow—where the loud tick of the clock is the *only* sound—and give myself up to the charmed

sense that in your complicated career, amid all the more immediate claims of the *bonne année*, you have been moved to this delightful sign of remembrance of an old friend who is on the whole, and has always been, condemned to lose so much more of you (through divergence of ways!) than he has been privileged to enjoy. Snatches, snatches, and happy and grateful moments—and then great empty yearning intervals only—and under all the great ebbing, melting, and irrecoverableness of life! But this is almost a happy and grateful moment—almost a *real* one, I mean—though again with bristling frontiers, long miles of land and water, doing their best to make it vain and fruitless. You live on the crest of the wave, and I deep down in the hollow—and your waves seem to be all crests, just as mine are only concave formations! I feel at any rate very much in the hollow these winter months—when great adventures, like Paris, look far and formidable, and I see a domestic reason for sitting tight wherever I turn my eyes. That reads as if I had thirteen children—or thirty wives—instead of being so lone and lorn; but what it means is that I have, in profusion, modest, backward labours. We have been having here lately the great and glorious pendulum in person, Mrs. Wharton, on her return oscillation, spending several weeks in England, for almost the first time ever and having immense success—so that I think she might fairly fix herself here—if she could stand it! But she is to be at 58 Rue de Varenne again from the New Year and you will see her and she will give you details. *My* detail is that though she has kindly asked me to come to them again there this month or spring I have had to plead simple abject terror—terror of the pendulous life. I am a *stopped* clock—and I strike (that is I caper about) only

when very much wound up. Now I don't have to be wound up at all to tell you what a yearning I have to see you all back *here*—and what a kind of sturdy faith that I absolutely shall. Then your crest will be much nearer my hollow, and vice-versa, and you will be able to look down quite *straight* at me, and we shall be almost together again—as we really must manage to be for these interesting times to come. I don't want to miss any more Harry's freshnesses of return from the great country—with the golden apples of his impression still there on the tree. I have always only tasted them plucked by other hands and—baked! I want to munch these *with* you—en famille. Therefore I confidently await and evoke you. I delight in these proofs of strength of your own and am yours always and ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To W. D. Howells.*

H. J.'s tribute to the memory of his old friend, Professor C. E. Norton, is included in *Notes on Novelists*.

Lamb House, Rye.

New Year's Eve, 1908.

My dear Howells,

I have a beautiful Xmas letter from you and I respond to it on the spot. It tells me charming things of you—such as your moving majestically from one beautiful home to another, apparently still more beautiful; such as the flow of your inspiration never having been more various and more torrential—and all so deliciously remunerated an inspiration; such as your having been on to dear C. E. N.'S obsequies—what a Cambridge *date* that, even for you and me—and having also found time to see and “appreciate” my

dear collaterals, of the two generations (aren't they extraordinarily good and precious collaterals?); such, finally, as your recognising, with so fine a charity, a "message" in the poor little old "Siege of London," which, in all candour, affects me as pretty dim and rococo, though I did lately find, in going over it, that it holds quite well together, and I touched it up where I could. I have but just come to the end of my really very insidious and ingenious labour on behalf of all that series—though it has just been rather a blow to me to find that I've come (as yet) to no reward whatever. I've just had the pleasure of hearing from the Scribners that though the Edition began to appear some 13 or 14 months ago, there is, on the volumes already out, no penny of profit owing me—of that profit to which I had partly been looking to pay my New Year's bills! It will have landed me in Bankruptcy—unless it picks up; for it has prevented my doing any other work whatever; which indeed must now begin. I have fortunately broken ground on an American novel, but when you draw my ear to the liquid current of your own promiscuous abundance and facility—a flood of many affluents—I seem to myself to wander by contrast in desert sands. And (I find our art, all the while, more difficult of practice, and want, with that, to do it in a more and more difficult way; it being really, at bottom, only difficulty that interests me.) Which is a most accursed way to be constituted.) I should be passing a very—or a rather—inhuman little Xmas if the youngest of my nephews (William's *minore*—aged 18—) hadn't come to me from the tutor's at Oxford with whom he is a little woefully coaching. But he is a dear young presence and worthy of the rest of the brood, and I've just packed him off to the little Rye annual

subscription ball of New Year's Eve—at the old Monastery—with a part of the “county” doubtless coming in to keep up the tradition—under the sternest injunction as to his not coming back to me “engaged” to a quadragenarian hack or a military widow—the mature women being here the greatest dancers.—You tell me of your “Roman book,” but you don't tell me you've sent it me, and I very earnestly wish you *would*—though not without suiting the action to the word. And *anything* you put forth anywhere or anyhow that looks my way in the least, I should be tenderly grateful for. . . . I should like immensely to come over to you again—really like it and for uses still (!!) to be possible. But it's practically, materially, physically impossible. Too late—too late! The long years have betrayed me—but I am none the less constantly yours all,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edward Lee Childe.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
[Jan. 8, 1909.]

My dear old Friend,

Please don't take my slight delay in thanking you for your last remembrance as representing any limit to the degree in which it touches me. You are faithful and *courtois* and gallant, in this unceremonious age, to the point of the exemplary and the authoritative—in the sense that *vous y faites autorité*, and only the multitudinous waves of the Christmastide and the New Year's high tide, as all that matter lets itself loose in this country, have kept me from landing (correspondentially speaking) straight at your door. I like to know that you so

admirably keep up your tone and your temper, and even your interest, and perhaps even as much your general faith (as I try for that matter to do myself), in spite of disconcerting years and discouraging sensations—once in a way perhaps; in spite, briefly, of earthquakes and newspapers and motor-cars and aeroplanes. I myself, frankly, have lost the desire to live in a situation (by which I mean in a world) in which I can be invaded from so many sides at once. I go in fear, I sit exposed, and when the German Emperor carries the next war (hideous thought) into this country, my chimneys, visible to a certain distance out at sea, may be his very first objective. You may say that that is just a good reason for my coming to Paris again all promptly and before he arrives—and indeed reasons for coming to Paris, as for doing any other luxurious or licentious thing, never fail me: the drawback is that they are all of the sophisticating sort against which I have much to brace myself. If you were to see *from* what you summon me, it would be brought home to you that a small rude Sussex burgher *must* feel the strain of your Parisian high pitch, haute élégance, general glittering life and conversation; the strain of keeping up with it all and mingling in the fray. . . .

Let me thank you, further, for indicating to me the new volumes by the Duchesse de Dino—what a wealth of such *stored* treasures does the French world still, at this time of day, produce—when one would suppose the sack had been again and again emptied. The Literary Supplement of this week's *Times* has a sympathetic review of the book—which I shall send for by reason of the Duchess and the English reminiscences, and not for any sake of Talleyrand, who always affects me as a repulsive figure, such as I

couldn't have borne to be in the same room with. I should have asked you, had I lately had a preliminary chance, for a word of news of Paul Harvey and whether he is actually or still in Egypt. . . . I wish Madame Marie all peace and plenty for the coming year—though I am not sure I envy her Lausanne in January. But I am yours and hers all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Hugh Walpole.*

Lamb House, Rye.

March 28th, 1909.

My dear Hugh,

I have had so bad a conscience on your score, ever since last writing to you with that as yet unredeemed promise of my poor image or effigy, that the benignity of your expressions has but touched me the more. On coming to look up some decent photograph among the few odds and ends of such matters to be here brought out of hiding, I found nothing that wasn't hateful to me to put into circulation. I have been very little and very ill (*always* very ill) represented—and not at all for a long time, and shall never be again; and of the two or three disinherited illustrations of that truth that I have put away for you to choose between you must come here and make selection, yourself carrying them off. My reluctant hand can't bring itself to "send" them. Heaven forbid such sendings!

Can you come some day—some Saturday—in April?—I mean after Easter. Bethink yourself, and let it be the 17th or the 24th if possible. (I expect to go up to town for four or five weeks the 1st May.) You are keeping clearly such a glorious holiday now that I fear you may hate



to begin again; but you'll have with me in every way much shorter commons, much sterner fare, much less purple and fine linen, and in short a much more constant reminder of your mortality than while you loll in A. C. B.'s chariot of fire. Therefore, as I say, come grimly down. Loll none the less, however, meanwhile, to your utmost—such opportunities, I recognise, are to be fondly cherished. If you give A. C. B. this news of me, please assure him with my love that I am infinitely, that I am yearningly aware of *that*. He'd see soon enough if he were some day to let *me* loll. However I am going to Cambridge for some as yet undetermined 48 hours in May, and if he will let me loll for one of those hours at Magdalene it will do almost as well—I mean of course he being there. However, even if he does flee at my approach—and the possession of a fleeing-machine *must* enormously prompt that sort of thing—I rejoice immensely meanwhile that you have the kindness of him; I am magnanimous enough for that. Likewise I am tender-hearted enough to be capable of shedding tears of pity and sympathy over young Hugh on the threshold of fictive art—and with the long and awful vista of large production in a largely producing world before him. Ah, dear young Hugh, it will be very grim for you with your faithful and dismal friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Lamb House, Rye.

April 19th, 1909.

My dear Edith,

I thank you very kindly for your so humane and so interesting letter, even if I must thank you a little briefly—having but this

afternoon got out of bed, to which the Doctor three days ago consigned me—for a menace of jaundice, which appears however to have been, thank heaven, averted! (I once had it, and *basta così*;) so that I am a little shaky and infirm. You give me a sense of endless things that I yearn to know more of, and I clutch hard the hope that you will indeed come to England in June. I have had—to be frank—a bad and worried and depressed and inconvenient winter—with the serpent-trail of what seemed at the time—the time you kindly offered me a princely hospitality—a tolerably ominous cardiac crisis—as to which I have since, however, got considerable information and reassurance—from the man in London most completely master of the subject—that is of the whole mystery of heart-troubles. I am definitely better of that condition of December-January, and really believe I shall be better yet; only that particular brush of the dark wing leaves one never quite the same—and I have not, I confess (with amelioration, even,) been lately very famous; (which I shouldn't mention, none the less, were it not that I really believe myself, for definite reasons, and intelligent ones, on the way to a much more complete emergence—both from the above-mentioned and from other worries.) So much mainly to explain to you my singularly unsympathetic silence during a period of anxiety and discomfort on your own part which I all the while feared to be not small—but which I now see, with all affectionate participation, to have been extreme. . . . Sit loose and live in the day—don't borrow trouble, and remember that nothing happens as we forecast it—but always with interesting and, as it were, refreshing differences. "Tired" you must be, even you, indeed; and Paris, as I look at it from here, figures to me a

great blur of intense white light in which, attached to the hub of a revolving wheel, you are all whirled round by the finest silver strings. "Mazes of heat and sound" envelop you to my wincing vision—given over as I am to a craven worship (*only*, henceforth) of peace at any price. This dusky village, all deadening grey and damp (muffling) green, meets more and more my supreme appreciation of stillness—and here, in June, you must come and find me—to let me emphasize that—appreciation!—still further. You'll rest with me here then, but don't wait for that to rest somehow—somewhere en attendant. I am afraid you won't rest much in a retreat on the Place de la Concorde. However, so does a poor old croaking barnyard fowl advise a golden eagle! . . .

I am, dearest Edith, all constantly and tenderly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Arthur Christopher Benson.*

Queen's Acre, Windsor.

June 5th, 1909.

My dear Arthur,

Howard S. has given me so kind a message from you that it is like the famous coals of fire on my erring head—renewing my rueful sense of having suffered these last days to prolong the too graceless silence that I have, in your direction, been constantly intending and constantly failing to break. It isn't only that I owe you a letter, but that I have exceedingly wanted to write it—ever since I began (too many weeks ago) to feel the value of the gift that you lately made me in the form of the acquaintance of delightful and interesting young Hugh Walpole. He has been down to see me

in the country, and I have had renewed opportunities of him in town—the result of which is that, touched as I am with his beautiful candour of appreciation of my “feeble efforts,” etc., I feel for him the tenderest sympathy and an absolute affection. I am in general almost—or very often—sorry for the intensely young, intensely confident and intensely ingenuous and generous—but I somehow don’t pity *him*, for I think he has some gift to conciliate the Fates. I feel him at any rate an admirable young friend, of the openest mind and most attaching nature, and anything I can ever do to help or enlighten, to guard or guide or comfort him, I shall do with particular satisfaction, and with a lively sense of being indebted to you for the interesting occasion of it. Of these last circumstances please be very sure.

I go to Cambridge next Friday, for almost the first time in my life—to see a party of three friends whom I am in the singular position of never having seen in my life (I shall be for two or three days with Charles Sayle, 8 Trumpington Street,) and I confess to a hope of finding you there (if so be it you *can* by chance be;) though if you flee before the turmoil of the days in question, when everything, I am told, is at concert pitch, I won’t insist that I shan’t have understood it. If you are, at any rate, at Magdalene I should like very much to knock at your door, and see you face to face for half-an-hour; if that may be possible. And I won’t conceal from you that I should like to see your College and your abode and your *genre de vie*—even though your countenance most of all. If you are not, in a manner, well, as Howard hints to me, I shan’t (perhaps I *can’t*!) make you any worse—and I may make you a little better. Meditate on that, and do, in the connection,

what you can for me. Boldly, at any rate, shall I knock; and if you are absent I shall yearn over the sight of your ancient walls.

I am spending a dark, cold, dripping Sunday here—with two or three other amis de la maison; but above all with the ghosts, somehow, of a promiscuous past brushing me as with troubled wings, and the echoes of the ancient years seeming to murmur to me: "Don't you wish you were still young—or young again—even as *they* so wonderfully are?" (my fellow-visitors and inexhaustibly soft-hearted host.) I don't know that I particularly do wish it—but the melancholy voices (I mean the *inaudible* ones of the loquacious saloon) have thus driven me to a rather cold room (my own) of refuge, to invoke thus scratchily *your* fine friendly attention and to reassure you of the constant sympathy and fidelity of yours, my dear Arthur, all gratefully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Charles Sayle.*

For several years past H. J. had received a New Year greeting from three friends at Cambridge—Mr. Charles Sayle, Mr. A. T. Bartholomew, Mr. Geoffrey Keynes—none of whom he had met till he went up to Cambridge this month to stay with Mr. Sayle during May-week. It was on this occasion that he first met Rupert Brooke.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

June 16th, 1909.

My dear Charles Sayle,

I want to send you back a grateful—and graceful—greeting—and to let you all know that the more I think over your charming hospitality and friendly labour and (so to speak) loyal service, the more I feel touched and convinced. My three days with you will become

for me a very precious little treasure of memory—they are in fact already taking their place, in that character, in a beautiful little innermost niche, where they glow in a golden and rose-coloured light. I have come back to sterner things; you did nothing but beguile and waylay—making me loll, not only figuratively, but literally (so unforgettably—all that wondrous Monday morning), on perfect surfaces exactly adapted to my figure. For their share in these generous yet so subtle arts please convey again my thanks to all concerned—and in particular to the gentle Geoffrey and the admirable Theodore, with a definite stretch toward the insidious Rupert—with whose name I take this liberty because I don't know whether one loves one's love with a (surname terminal) *e* or not. Please take it from me, all, that I shall live but to testify to you further, and in some more effective way than this—my desire for which is as a long rich vista that can only be compared to that adorable great perspective of St. John's Gallery as we saw it on Saturday afternoon. Peace then be with you—I hope it came promptly after the last strain and stress and all the rude portage (*so* appreciated!) to which I subjected you. I'll fetch and carry, in some fashion or other, for *you* yet, and am ever so faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. Just a momentary drop to meaner things—to say that I appear to have left in my room a *sleeping-suit* (blue and white pyjamas—jacket and trousers,) which, in the hurry of my departure and my eagerness to rejoin you a little in the garden before tearing myself away, I probably left folded away under my pillows. If your brave Housekeeper (who evaded my look about for her at the last) will very kindly make of them such

a little packet as may safely reach me here by parcels' post she will greatly oblige yours again (and hers),

H. J.

*To Mrs. W. K. Clifford.*

The two plays on which H. J. was at work were *The Other House* (written many years before and now revised) and *The Outcry*.

Lamb House, Rye.

July 19th, 1909.

Dearest Lucy C !

I have been a prey to agitations and complications, many assaults, invasions and inconveniences, since leaving town—whereby I have had to put off thanking you for two brilliant letters. And yet I have wanted to write—to tell you (explaining) how I found myself swallowed up by one social abyss after another, and tangled in a succession of artful feminine webs, at Stafford House that evening, so that I couldn't get into touch with you, or with Ethel, again, before you were gone, as I found when I finally made a dash for you. That too was very complicated, and evening-parties bristle with dangers. . . . The very critical business of the *final* luminous copy is, however, coming to an end—I mean the arriving at the utterly last intense reductions and compressions. So much has to come out, however, that I am sickened and appalled—and this sacrifice of the very life-blood of one's play, the mere vulgar anatomy and bare-bones poverty to which one has to squeeze it more and more, is the nauseating side of the whole desperate job. In spite of which I am interesting myself deeply in the three act comedy I have undertaken for Frohman—and which I

find ferociously difficult—but with a difficulty that, thank God, draws me on and fascinates. (If I can go on *believing in* my subject I can go on treating it; but sometimes I have a mortal chill and wonder if I ain't damnably deluded.) However, the balance inclines to faith and I *think* it works out. You shall hear what comes of it—even at the worst. Meanwhile for yourself, dearest Lucy, buck up and patiently woo the Muse. She responds at last always to true and faithful wooing—to the right artful patience—and turns upon one the smile from which light breaks. I have been reading over the Long Duel (which I immediately return)—with a sense of its having great charm and care of execution, and quality and grace, but also, dear Lucy, of its drawbacks for practical prosperity. (The greatest of these seems to me to be fundamental—to reside in the fact that the subject isn't dramatic, that it deals with a *state*, a position, a situation (of the "static"-kind), and not, save in a very minor degree, with an action, a progression; which fact, highly favourable to it for a tale, a psychologic picture, is detrimental to its *tense-ness*—to its being matter for a play and developed into 4 acts. A play appears to me of necessity to involve a struggle, a question (of whether, and how, will it or won't it happen? and if so, or not so, how and why?—which we have the suspense, the curiosity, the anxiety, the *tension*, in a word, of seeing; and which means that the whole thing shows an attack upon *oppositions*—with the victory or the failure on one side or the other, and each wavering and shifting, from point to point.)) But your hero is thus not an *agent*, he is passive, he doesn't take the field. I say all this because I think there is light on the matter of the history of the fate of the play in it—and also think that there are



other elements of disadvantage for the piece too. The elderly (or almost?) French artist with a virtuous love-sorrow doesn't, for the B.P., belong to the *actual*; he's romantic, and old-fashionedly romantic, and remote; and the case is aggravated by the corresponding maturity of the heroine. You will say that there is the young couple, and what comes of their being there, and *their* "action"; but the truth about that, I fear, is that innocent young lovers *as such*, and not as being engaged in other difficulties and with other oppositions (*of their own*,) have practically ceased to be a dramatic value—aren't any longer an element or an interest to conjure with. Don't hate me for saying these things—for working them out critically, and so far as may be, illuminatingly, in face of the difficulty the L.D. seems to have had in getting itself brought out. We are dealing with an art prodigiously difficult and arduous every way—and in which one seems most of all to sink into a Sea of colossal Waste. I'm not sure that *The Other House*, after all my not-to-be-reckoned labour and calculation on it, isn't (to be) wasted. But these are dreary words—it is much past midnight. I *am* damned critical—for it's the only thing to be, and all else is damned humbug. But I don't mean a douche of cold water, and am ever so tenderly and faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Grace Norton.*

Lamb House, Rye.

August 10th, 1909.

. . . . I break ground with you thus, dear Grace, late in the evening (too late—for I shall soon have to go *most* belatedly to bed)

of a singularly beautiful and glowingly hot summer's day—one of a succession that August has at last brought us (and with more, apparently, in store,) after a wholly damnable June and July, a hideous ordeal of wet and cold. English fine weather is worth waiting for—it is so sovereign in quality when it comes, and the capacity of this little place of a few marked odd elements to become charming, to shine and flush and endear itself, is then so admirable. I went out for my afternoon walk under stress of having promised my good little gardener (a real pearl of price—these eleven years—in the way of a serving-man) to come and witness his possible triumphs at our annual little horticultural show, given this year in some charming private grounds on a high hill overlooking our little huddled (and lower-hilled) purple town. There I found myself in the extraordinary position—save that other summers might—but haven't—softened the edge of the monstrosity—of seeing “Henry James Esq.” figure on *thirteen* large cards commemorative of first, second and third prizes—and of more first, even, if you can believe it, than the others. It always [seems] to point, more than anything else, the moral, for me, of my long expatriation and to put its “advantages” into a nutshell. In what corner of our native immensity could I have fallen—and practically without effort, helpless ignoramus though I be—into the uncanny flourish of a swell at local flower shows? Here it has come of itself—and it crowns my career. How I wish you weren't too far away for me to send you a box of my victorious carnations and my triumphant sweet peas! However, I remember your telling me with emphasis long years ago that you hated “cut flowers,” and I have treasured your brave heresy (the memory of it) so ineffaceably

so as to find support in it always, and fine precedent, for a very lukewarm adhesion to them myself, except for a slight inconsistency in the matter of roses and sweet peas (both supremely lovable, I think, in their kind,) which increase and multiply and bless one in proportion as one tears them from the stem. However, it's 1.30 a.m. o'clock—and I am putting this to bed; till to-morrow night again, when I shall pull it forth and add to its yearning volume. I *have* to write at night, and even late at night—to write letter-things at all; for the simple reason of being so vilely constituted for work that when my regularly recurring morning stint is done (from after breakfast to luncheon-time,) I too am “done” utterly, and so cerebrally spent (with the effort to distil “quality” for three or four hours,) that I can't touch a pen till as much as possible of the day has elapsed, to build out and disconnect my morning's association with it. That is one reason—and always has been—of my baseness as a correspondent. The question is whether the effect I produce as a “story writer” is of a nature to make up for it. You will say “most certainly not!”—and who shall blame you? But goodnight and à demain.

*August 11th.* I don't mean this to be a diary—but it has been another splendid summer day—and I am wondering if you sit in the loose but warm embrace of bowery Cambridge. Every now and then I read in the Times of “92° in the shade in America,” and Cambridge is so intensely your America that I ask myself—though my imagination breaks down in the effort to place you anywhere, even as I write again, by my late ticking clock, in this hot stillness, [but] in the vine-tangled porch where I sat so often anciently, but only a little, alas, that other

more often and more variously hindered year. It has been *almost* 92° in the shade, or has almost felt like it here to-day; in spite of which I took—and enjoyed—a long slow walk over the turf by our tidal “channel” here (which goes straight forth to *the* channel, and over to France, at the end of a mile or two, and has a beautiful colour at the flow.) . . . I’m spending a very quiet summer, to which the complete absence of any visiting or sojourning relative (a frequent and prized feature with me most other years) gives a rather melancholy blankness. But I’m hoping for a nephew or two—William’s Bill, that is, next month; and meanwhile the season melts in my grasp and ebbs with an appalling rush (don’t you find, at our age?), for there are still things I want to *do*, and I ask myself, at such a rate, How? I lately, as I think I’ve mentioned, spent a couple of months in London, and saw as much as I could of Sally and Lily, whom I found most agreeable, and *confirmed* in their respective types of charm and character. Lily is still in England—and of course you know all about her—I hope to have her with me here before long for a couple of days. But there is nothing I more wonder at, dear Grace, than the question of what Cambridge has become to you, or seems to you, without (practically) a Shady Hill, after the long years. It must be, altogether, much of a changed world—and thus, afar off, I wonder. It is a way of getting again into communication with you, or at any rate of making you a poor wild and wandering sign, as over broken and scarce *sounding* wires, of the perfect affectionate fidelity of your firm old friend, my dear Grace, of all and all the wonderful years,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William James.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Aug. 17th, 1909.

Dearest William,

I respond without delay to the blessing of your letter of the 6th—which gives me so general a good impression of you all that I must somehow celebrate it. I like to think of your tranquil—if the word be the least applicable!—Chocorua summer; and as the time of year comes round again of my sole poor visit there (my mere fortnight from September 1st 1904), the yearning but baffled thought of being with you on that woodland scene and at the same season once more tugs at my sensibilities and is almost too much for me. I have the sense of my then leaving it all unsated, after a beggarly snatch only, and of how I might have done with so much more of it. But I shall pretty evidently have to do with what I got. The very smell and sentiment of the American summer's end there and of Alice's beautiful "rustic" hospitality of overflowing milk and honey, to say nothing of squash pie and ice-cream in heroic proportions, all mingle for me with the assault of forest and lake and of those delicious orchardy, yet rocky vaguenesses and Arcadian "nowheres," which are the note of what is sweetest and most attaching in the dear old American, or particularly New England, scenery. It comes back to me as with such a magnificent beckoning looseness—in relieving contrast to the consummate tightness (a part, too, oddly, of the very wealth of effect) *du pays d'ici*. It isn't however, luckily, that I have really turned "agin" my landscape portion here, for never so much as this summer, e.g., have I felt the

immensely noble, the truly aristocratic, beauty of this splendid county of Sussex, especially as the winged car of offence has monstrously unfolded it to me. This afternoon an amiable neighbour, Mrs. Richard Hennessy, motored me over to Hurstmonceaux Castle, which, in spite of its being but about ten miles "back of" Hastings, and not more than twenty from here, I had never yet seen. It's a prodigious romantic ruin, in an adorable old ruined park; but the splendour of the views and horizons, and of the rich composition and perpetual picture and inexhaustible detail of the country, had never more come home to me. I don't do such things, however, every day, thank goodness, and am having the very quietest summer, I think, that has melted away for me (how they do melt!) since I came to live here. I miss the tie of consanguinity—that I have so often felt!—and now (especially since your letter, for you mention his other plans) I find myself calling on the hoped-for Bill in vain. We lately have had (it broke but yesterday) a splendid heated term—very highly heated—following on a wholly detestable June and July and having lasted without a lapse the whole month up to now—which has been admirable and enjoyable and of a renewed consecration to this dear little old garden. I hope it hasn't broken for good, as complications, of sorts, loom for me next month—but the high possibility is that we shall still have earned, and have suffered for in advance, a fine August-end and September. My window is open wide even now—but to the blustering, softly-storming, south-windy midnight. And through thick and thin I have been very quietly and successfully working. It all pans out, I think, in a very promising way, but it is too "important" for me to chatter about save on the proved, or

proveable, basis that now seems rather largely to await it. And I grow, I think, small step by small step, physically easier and easier, and seem to know, pretty steadily, more and more where I am. . . . I have been following you and Alice in imagination to the kind and beautiful Intervale hospitality—my charming taste of which has remained with me ever so gratefully and uneffacedly, please tell the Merrimans when you have another chance. You tell me that Alice and Harry lift all practical burdens from your genius—than which they surely couldn't have a nobler or a more inspiring task;—but what a fate and a fortune yours too—to have an Alice reinforced by a Harry, and a Harry multiplied by an Alice! L'un vaut l'autre—as they appear to me in the wondrous harmony. You don't mention Harry's getting to you at all—but my mind recoils with horror from the thought that he is not in these days getting somewhere. It's a blow to me to learn that Bill is again to hibernate in Boston—but softened by what you so delightfully tell me of your portrait and of the nature and degree of his progress. If he can do much and get on so there, why right he is of course to stay—and most interesting is it to learn that he *can* do so much; I wish I could see something—and can't your portrait be photographed? But I lately wrote to him appealingly; and he will explain to me all things. Admirable your evocation of the brave and brown and beautiful Peg—of whom I wish I weren't so howlingly deprived. But please tell her I drench her with her old uncle's proudest and fondest affection. I hang tenderly over Aleck—while *he*, poor boy, hangs so toughly over God knows what—and fervently do I pray for him. And you and Alice I embrace.

Ever your HENRY.

To H. G. Wells.

Lamb House, Rye.

October 14th, 1909.

My dear Wells,

I took down Ann Veronica in deep rich draughts during the two days following your magnanimous "donation" of her, and yet have waited till now to vibrate to you visibly and audibly under that pressed spring. I never vibrated under anything of yours, on the whole, I think, *more* than during that intense inglutition; but if I have been hanging fire of acclamation and comments, as I hung it, to my complete self-stultification and beyond recovery, over Tono-Bungay, it is simply because, confound you, there is so much too much to say, *always*, after everything of yours; and the critical principle so rages within me (by which I mean the appreciative, the *real* gustatory,) that I tend to labour under the superstition that one must always say *all*. But I can't do that, and I won't—so that I almost intelligently and coherently choose, which simplifies a little the question. And nothing matters after the fact that you are to me so much the most interesting representational and ironic genius and faculty, of our Anglo-Saxon world and life, in these bemuddled days, that you stand out intensely vivid and alone, making nobody else signify at all. And this has never been more the case than in A.V., where your force and life and ferocious sensibility and heroic cheek all take effect in an extraordinary wealth and truth and beauty and *fury* of impressionism. The quantity of things *done*, in your whole picture, excites my liveliest admiration—so much so that I was able to let



myself go, responsively and assentingly, under the strength of the feeling communicated and the impetus accepted, almost as much as if your "method," and fifty other things—by which I mean sharp questions coming up—left me *only* passive and convinced, unchallenging and uninquiring (which they *don't*—no, they don't!) I don't think, as regards this latter point, that I can make out what your subject or Idea, the prime determinant one, may be detected as having *been* (lucidity and logic, on that score, not, to my sense, reigning supreme.) But there I am as if I were wanting to say "all"!—which I'm not now, I find, a bit. I only want to say that the thing is irresistible (or indescribable) in its subjective assurance and its rare objective vividness and colour. You must at moments make dear old Dickens turn—for envy of the eye and the ear and the nose and the mouth of you—in his grave. I don't think the girl herself—her projected Ego—the best thing in the book—I think it rather wants clearness and *nuances*. But the *men* are prodigious, all, and the total result lives and kicks and throbs and flushes and glares—I mean hangs there in the very air we breathe, and that you are a very swagger performer indeed and that I am your very gaping and grateful

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Henrietta Reubell.*

*Crapy Cornelia*, embodiment of the New York of H. J.'s youth, will be remembered as one of the stories in *The Finer Grain*.

Lamb House, Rye.

Oct. 19, 1909.

Dearest Etta Reubell—my very old friend indeed!

Your letter charms and touches me, and I rejoice you were moved to write it. You have *understood* "Crapy Cornelia"—and people so very often seem not to understand—that that alone gives me pleasure. But when you tell me also of my now *living*, really, in green and gold, in the dear little old Petit Salon and almost resting on the beloved red velvet sofa on which—in other days—I so often myself have rested, and which figures to me as the basis or background of a hundred delightful hours, the tears quite rise to my eyes and I have a sense of *success in life* that few other things have ever given me. I have not had a very good year—a baddish crisis about a twelvemonth ago; but I have gradually worked out of it and the prospect ahead is fairer. I really think I shall even be able to come and see you, and sit on the immemorial sofa, and see my kind and serried shelves play their part in your musée and figure as a class by Themselves among your relics—and to have that emotion I am capable of a great effort. I have great occasional *bouffées* of fond memory and longing from our dear old *past* Paris. It affects me as rather ghostly; but life becomes more and more that, and I have learnt to live with my pale spectres more than with my ruddy respirers. They will sit thick on the old red sofa. But with you the shepherdess

of the flock it will be all right. You are not Cornelia, but I am much White-Mason, and I shall again sit by your fire.

Your tout-dévoûé

HENRY JAMES.

*To William James.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 31st, 1909.

Dearest William,

I have beautiful communications from you all too long unacknowledged and unrequited—though I shall speak for the present but of the two most prized letters from you (from Cambridge and Chocorua respectively—not counting quaint sequels from Franconia, “autumn-tint” post-cards etc., a few days ago, or thereabouts, and leaving aside altogether, but only for later fond treatment, please assure them, an admirable one from Harry and an exquisite one from Bill.) To these I add the arrival, still more recently, of your brave new book, which I fell upon immediately and have quite passionately absorbed—to within 50 pages of the end; a great number previous to which I have read this evening—which makes me late to begin this. I find it of thrilling interest, triumphant and brilliant, and am lost in admiration of your wealth and power. I palpitate as you make out your case (since it seems to me you so utterly do,) as I under no romantic spell ever palpitate now; and into that case I enter intensely, unreservedly, and I think you would allow almost intelligently. I find you nowhere as difficult as you surely make everything for your critics. Clearly you are winning a great battle and great will be your fame. Your letters seem to me to reflect a happy and easy summer achieved—and I recognise in them

with rapture, and I trust not fallaciously, a comparative immunity from the horrid human *incubi*, the awful "people" fallacy, of the past, and your ruinous sacrifices to that bloody Moloch. May this luminous exemption but grow and grow! and with it your personal and physical peace and sufficiency, your profitable possession of yourself. Amen, amen—over which I hope dear Alice hasn't *lieu* to smile! . . . .

*November 1st.* I broke this off last night and went to bed—and now add a few remarks after a grey soft windless and miraculously rainless day (under a most rainful sky,) which has had rather a sad hole made in it by a visitation from a young person from New York. . . . [who] stole from me the hour or two before my small evening feed in which I hoped to finish "The Meaning of Truth"; but I have done much toward this since that repast, and with a renewed eagerness of inglutition. You surely make philosophy more interesting and living than anyone has ever made it before, and by a real creative and undemolishable making; whereby all you write plays into *my* poor "creative" consciousness and artistic vision and pretension with the most extraordinary suggestiveness and force of application and inspiration. Thank the powers—that is thank *yours*!—for a relevant and assimilable and referable philosophy, which is related to the rest of one's intellectual life otherwise and more conveniently than a fowl is related to a fish. In short, dearest William, the effect of these collected papers of your present volume—which I had read all individually before—seems to me exquisitely and adorably cumulative and, so to speak, consecrating; so that I, for my part, feel Pragmatic invulnerability constituted. Much will this *suffrage* help the cause!—Not less inspiring to me, for that matter, is the account

you give, in your beautiful letter of October 6th, from Chocorua, of Alice and the offspring, Bill and Peggot in particular, confirming so richly all my previous observation of the Son and letting in such rich further lights upon the Daughter . . . I mean truly to write her straight and suplicate her for a letter. . . .

. . . But good-night again—as my thoughts flutter despairingly (of attainment) toward your farawayness, under the hope that the Cambridge autumn is handsome and wholesome about you. I yearn over Alice to the point of wondering if some day before Xmas she may find a scrap of a moment to testify to me a little about the situation with her now too unfamiliar pen. Oh if you only *can* next summer come out for two years! This home shall be your fortress and temple and headquarters as never, never, even, before. I embrace you all—I send my express love to Mrs. Gibbens—and am your fondest of brothers,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
[December 13th, 1909.]

Dear Edith,

I'm horribly in arrears with you and it hideously looks as if I hadn't deeply revelled and rioted in your beautiful German letter in particular—which thrilled me to the core. You are indeed my ideal of the dashing woman, and you never dashed more felicitously or fruitfully, for my imagination, than when you dashed, at that particular psychologic moment, off to dear old rococo Munich of the "Initials" (of my tender youth,) and again of my far-away 30th year. (I've never been there depuis.) Vivid

and charming and sympathetic *au possible* your image and echo of it all; only making me gnash my teeth that I wasn't with you, or that at least I can't ply you, face to face, with more questions even than your letter delightfully anticipates. It came to me during a fortnight spent in London—and all letters that reach me there, when I'm merely on the branch, succeed in getting themselves treasured up for better attention after I'm back here. But the real difficulty in meeting your gorgeous revelations as they deserve is that of breaking out in sympathy and curiosity at points enough—and leaping with you breathless from Schiller to Tiepolo—through all the Gothicism of Augsburg, Würzburg, and so weiter. I want the rest, none the less—all the rest, after Augsburg and the *Weinhandlung*, and above all how it looks to you from Paris (if not Paradise) regained again—in respect to which gaping contrast I am immensely interested in your superlative commendation of the ensemble and well-doneness of the second play at Munich (though it is at *Cabale und Liebe* that I ache and groan to the core for not having been with you.) It is curious how a strange deep-buried Teutonism in one (without detriment to the tropical forest of surface, and half-way-down, Latinism) stirs again at moments under stray Germanic *souffles*, and makes one so far from being sorry to be akin to the race of Goethe and Heine and Dürer and *their* kinship. At any rate I rejoice that you had your plunge—which (the whole pride and pomp of which) makes me sit here with the feeling of a mere aged British pauper in a workhouse. However, of course I shan't get real thrilling and throbbing items and illustrations till I have them from your lips: to which remote and precarious possibility I must resign myself. . . . And now I am back here for—I hope—many weeks

to come; having a morbid taste for some, even most—though not all—of the midwinter conditions of this place. Turkeys and mince pies are being accumulated for Xmas, as well as calendars, penwipers, and formidable lists of persons to whom tips will be owing; a fine old Yuletide observance in general, *quoi!* . . . But good night—*tanti saluti affettuosi.*

Ever your

H. J.

*To Madame Wagnière.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Dec. 22nd, 1909.

My dear Laura Wagnière,

The general turmoil of the year's end has done its best to prevent my sooner expressing to you my great rejoicing in all the pleasantness of your news of your settled state by the "plus beau des lacs"; a consummation on which I heartily congratulate you both. A real rest, for the soles of one's feet, a receptacle and domestic temple for one's battered possessions, is what I myself found, better than I had ever found it before, some dozen years ago in *this* decent nook, and I feel I can only wish you to even get half as much good of it as I have got of my small impregnable stronghold—or better still, incorruptible hermitage. Yours isn't a hermitage of course, since hermits don't—in spite of St. Anthony and his famous complications (or rather and doubtless by reason of them)—have wives or female friends: and *very* holy women don't even have husbands.

But it's evidently a delightful place, on which I cast my benediction and which I shall rejoice some day to see, so that you must let me tenderly nourish the hope. I have always had, and from

far back, my *première jeunesse*, a great sentiment for all your Vaudois lake shore. I remember perfectly your Tour de Peilz neighbourhood, and at the thought of all the beauty and benignity that crowds your picture I envy you as much as I applaud. If I did not live in this country and in this possibility of contact with London, for which I have many reasons, I think I too would fix myself in Switzerland, and in your conveniently cosmopolite part of it, where you are in the very centre of Europe and of a whole circle of easy communications and excursions. I was immensely struck with the way the Simplon tunnel makes a deliciously near thing of Italy (the last and first time I came through it a couple of years ago;) and when I remember how when I left Milan well after luncheon, I was at my hotel at Lausanne at 10.30 or so, your position becomes quite ideal, granting the proposition that one doesn't (any longer) so much want to live in that unspeakable country as to feel, whenever one will, well on the way to it. And you are on the way to so many other of the interesting countries, the roads to which all radiate from you as the spokes from the hub of a wheel—which remarks, however, you will have all been furiously making to yourselves; “all” I say, because I suppose Marguerite is now with you, and I don't suppose that even she wants to be always on the way to Boston only.

I hope you are having *là-bas* a less odious year than we *poverini*, who only see it go on from bad to worse, the deluge *en permanence*, with mud up to our necks and a consequent confinement to the house that is like an interminable stormy sea voyage under closed hatches. I have now spent some ten or eleven winters mainly in the country and find myself reacting violently at last in favour of pavements or street



lamps and lighted shop fronts—places where one can go out at 4 or at 5 or at 6, if the deluge has been “on” the hour before and has mercifully abated. Here at 5 or 6 the plunge is only into black darkness and the abysmal *crotte* aforesaid. I don’t say this to discourage you, for I am sure you have shop-fronts and pavements and tramcars highly convenient, and also without detriment to the charming-looking house of which you send me the likeness. It is evidently a most sympathetic spot, and I shall positively try, on some propitious occasion, to knock at its door. I envy you the drop into Italy that you will have by this time made, or come back from, after meeting your daughter. I send *her* my kindest remembrance and the same to her father.

I catch the distracted post (*so* distracted and distracting at this British Xmas-tide) and am, dear Laura Wagnière, your affectionate old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Thomas Sergeant Perry.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Dec. 22, 1909.

My dear Thomas,

As usual my silence has become so dense and coagulated that you might cut monstrous slabs and slices off it for distribution in your family—were you “maliciously” disposed! But my whole security—as my whole decency (so far as claim to decency for myself goes)—is that we are neither of us malicious, and that I have often enough shown you before that, deep as I may seem to plunge into the obscure, there ever comes an hour when, panting and puffing (as even now!) my head emerges again, to say nothing of my heart. I have treasured your *petit mot*

from a point of space unidentified, but despatched from a Holland-America ship and bearing a French and a Pas-de-Calais postage-stamp (a bit bewilderingly)—treasured it for the last month as a link with your receding form: the recession of which makes me miss your presence in this hemisphere out of proportion somehow to the—to any—frequency with which fortune enables me to enjoy it. But I still keep hold of the pledge that your retention (as I understand you) of your Paris apartment constitutes toward your soon coming back—and really feel that with a return under your protection and management absolutely guaranteed me, I too should have liked to tempt again the adventure with you; should have liked again to taste of the natal air—and perhaps even in a wider draught than you will go in for. However, I have neither your youth, your sinews, nor your fortune—let alone your other domestic blessings and reinforcements—and somehow the memory of what was fierce and formidable in our colossal country the last time I was there prevails with me over softer emotions, and I feel I shall never alight on it again save as upborne on the wings of some miracle that isn't in the least likely to occur. The nearest I shall come to it will be in my impatience for your return with the choice collection of notes I hope you will have taken for me. You have chosen a good year for absence—I mean a deplorable, an infamous one, in “Europe,” for any joy or convenience of air or weather. The pleasant land of France lies soaking as well as *this* more confessed and notorious sponge, I believe;—and I have now for months found life no better than a beastly sea-voyage of storms and submersions under closed hatches. We rot with dampness, confinement and despair—in short we are reduced to the abjectness,

as you see, of literally *talking* weather. You will see our Nephew Bill, I trust, promptly, in your rich art-world là-bas, and I beg you to add your pressure to mine on the question of our absolutely soon enjoying him over here. I am under a semi-demi-pledge to go to Paris for a fortnight in April—but it would be a more positive prospect, I think, if I knew I were to find you all there. Give my bestest love to Lilla, please, and my untutored homages to the Daughters of Music. Try to see Howells chez lui—so as to bring me every detail. Feel thus how much I count on you and receive from me every invocation proper to this annual crisis. May the genius of our common country have you in its most—or least?—energetic keeping. Yours, my dear Thomas, ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Owen Wister.*

The links will be recognised in this letter with H. J.'s old friend, Mrs. Fanny Kemble. Her daughters were Mrs. Leigh, wife of the Dean of Hereford, and the mother of Mr. Owen Wister.

Lamb House, Rye.  
Dec. 26th, 1909.

Dearest Owen!

Your so benevolent telegram greatly touches me, and I send you off this slower-travelling but all faithful and affectionate acknowledgment within an hour or two of receiving it. It hasn't told me much—save indeed that you sometimes think of me and are moved, as it were, toward me; and that verily—though I am incapable of supposing the contrary—is not a little. What I miss and deplore is some definite knowledge of how you are—deeply aware as I am that it adds a burden and

a terror to ill-health to have to keep reporting to one's friends *how* ill one is—or isn't. That's the last thing I dream of from you—and I possess my soul, and my desire for you, in patience—or I try to. I don't see any one, however, whom I can appeal to for light about you—for I missed, most lamentably, Florence La Farge during her heart-breaking little mockery of sixteen days in England a few weeks ago; she having written me in advance that she would come and see me, and then, within a few hours after her arrival, engaged herself so deep that she apparently couldn't manage it—nor I manage to get to London during the snatch of time she was there (for she was mainly in the country only.) I had had an idea that she would authentically know about you, and had I seen her I would have pumped her dry. I was at the Deanery for three or four days in September (quite incredibly—for the Hereford Festival,) and they were most kind, the Dean dear and delightful beyond even his ancient dearness etc.; but we only could fondly speculate and vainly theorize and yearn over you—and that didn't see us much forrarder. That I hope you are safe and sound again, and firm on your feet, and planning and tending somehow hitherward—that I hope this with fierce intensity I need scarcely assure you, need I? But the years melt away, and the changes multiply, and the facilities (some of them) diminish; the sands in the hour-glass run, in short, and Sister Anne comes down from her tower and says she sees nothing of you. But here I am where you last left me—and writing even now, late at night, in the little old oaken parlour where we had such memorable and admirable discourse. The sofa on which you stretched yourself is there behind me—and it holds out appealing little padded arms to you.

I don't seem to recognise any particular nearness for my being able to revisit *your* prodigious scene. The more the chill of age settles upon me the more formidable it seems. And I haven't myself had a very famous year here—for a few months in fact rather a bad and perturbing one ; but which has considerably cleared and redeemed itself now. We are just emerging from the rather deadly oppression of the English Xmastide—which I have spent at home for the first time for four years—a lone and lorn and stranded friend or two being with me ; with a long breath of relief that the worst is over. Terrific postal matter has accumulated, however—and the arrears of my correspondence make me quail and almost collapse. You see in this, already, the rather weary hand and head—but please feel and find in it too (with my true blessing on your wife and weans) all the old affection of your devoted

HENRY JAMES.

## VII

### RYE AND CHELSEA

(1910-1914)

For the next year—that is for the whole of 1910—Henry James was under the shadow of an illness, partly physical but mainly nervous, which deprived him of all power to work and caused him immeasurable suffering of mind. In spite of a constitution that in many ways was notably strong, the question of his health was always a matter of some concern to him, and he was by nature inclined to anticipate trouble; so that his temperament was not one that would easily react against a malady of which the chief burden was mental depression of the darkest kind. It would be impossible to exaggerate the distress that afflicted him for many months; but his determination to surmount it was unshaken and his recovery was largely a triumph of will. Fortunately he had the most sympathetic help at hand, over and above devoted medical care. Professor and Mrs. William James had planned to spend the summer in Europe again, and when they heard of his condition they hastened out to be with him as soon as possible. The company of his beloved brother and sister-in-law was the best in the world for him—indeed he could scarcely face any other; only with their support he felt able to cover the difficult

stages of his progress. It was William James's health, once more, that had made Europe necessary for him; he was in fact much more gravely ill than his brother, but it was not until later in the summer that his state began to cause alarm. By that time Henry, after paying a visit with his sister-in-law to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hunter at Epping, had joined him at Nauheim, in Germany, where a very anxious situation had to be met. While William James was losing ground, Henry was still suffering greatly, and the prospect of being separated from his family by their return to America was unendurable to him. It was decided that he should go with them, and they sailed before the end of August. They had just received the news of the death in America of their youngest brother, Robertson James, whose epitaph, memorial of an "agitated and agitating life," was afterwards written with grave tenderness in the "Notes of a Son and Brother."

William James sank very rapidly as they made the voyage, and the end came when they reached his home in the New Hampshire mountains. There is no need to say how deeply Henry mourned the loss of the nearest and dearest friend of his whole life; nothing can be added to the letters that will presently be read. All the more he clung to his brother's family, the centre of his profoundest affection. He remained with them during the winter at Cambridge, where very gradually he began to emerge from the darkness of depression and to feel capable of work again. He took up with interest a suggestion, made to him by Mrs. William James, that he should write some account of his parents and his early life; and as this idea developed in his mind it fed the desire to return home and devote himself to a record of old memories. He

lingered on in America, however, for the summer of 1911, now so much restored that he could enjoy visits to several friends. He welcomed, furthermore, two signs of appreciation that reached him almost at the same time—the offer of honorary degrees at Harvard and at Oxford. The Harvard degree was conferred before he left America, the Oxford doctorate of letters in the following year, when he received it in the company of the Poet Laureate.

As soon as he was established at Lamb House again (September 1911) he set to work upon *A Small Boy and Others*, and for a long time to come he was principally occupied with this book and the sequel to it. He went abroad no more and was never long away from Rye or London; but his power of regular work was not what it had been before his illness, and excepting a few of the papers in *Notes on Novelists* the two volumes of reminiscences were all that he wrote before the end of 1913. His health was still an anxiety, and his letters show that he began to regard himself as definitely committed to the life of an invalid. Yet it would be easy, perhaps, to gain a wrong impression from them of his state during these years. His physical troubles were certainly sometimes acute, but he kept his remarkable capacity for throwing them off, and in converse with his friends his vigour of life seemed to have suffered little. He had always loved slow and lengthy walks with a single companion, and possibly the most noticeable change was only that these became slower than ever, with more numerous pauses at points of interest or for the development of some picturesque turn of the talk. The grassy stretches between Rye and its sea-shore were exactly suited to long afternoons of this kind, and with a friend, better still a nephew or niece,



to walk with him, such was the occupation he preferred to any other. For the winter and spring he continued to return to London, where he still had his club-lodging in Pall Mall. After a sharp and very painful illness at Rye in the autumn of 1912 he moved into a more convenient dwelling—a small flat in Cheyne Walk, overhanging the Chelsea river-side. Here the long level of the embankment gave him opportunities of exercise as agreeable in their way as those at Rye, and he found himself liking to stay on in this “simplified London” until the height of the summer.

April 15, 1913, was his seventieth birthday, and a large company, nearly three hundred in number, of his English circle seized the occasion to make him a united offering of friendship. They asked him to allow his portrait to be painted by one of themselves, Mr. John S. Sargent. Henry James was touched and pleased, and for the next year the fortunes of Mr. Sargent’s work are fully recorded in the correspondence—from its happy completion and the private view of it in the artist’s studio, to the violence it suffered at the hands of a political agitator, while it hung in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1914, and its successful restoration from its injuries. The picture now belongs to the National Portrait Gallery. On Mr. Sargent’s commission a bust of Henry James was at the same time modelled by Mr. Derwent Wood.

Early in 1914, after an interval of all but ten years, Henry James began what he had often said he should never begin again—a long novel. It was the novel, at last, of American life, long ago projected and abandoned, and now revived as *The Ivory Tower*. Slowly and with many interruptions he proceeded with it, and he was well in the midst of it when he left Chelsea for

Lamb House in July 1914. His health was now on a better level than for some time past, and he counted on a peaceful and fruitful autumn of work at Rye.

*To T. Bailey Saunders.*

L. H.

Jan. 27th [1910].

My dear Bailey,

I am still in bed, attended by doctor and nurse, but doing very well and mending *now* very steadily and smoothly—so that I hope to be practically up early next week. Also I am touched by, and appreciative of, your solicitude. (You see I still cling to syntax or style, or whatever it is.) But I have had an infernal time really—I may now confide to you—pretty well all the while since I left you that sad and sinister morning to come back from the station. A digestive crisis making food loathsome and nutrition impossible—and sick inanition and weakness and depression permanent. However, *bed*, the good Skinner, M.D., the gentle nurse, with very small feedings administered every 2 hours, have got the better of the cursed state, and I am now hungry and redeemed and convalescent. The Election fight has revealed to me how ardent a Liberal lurks in the cold and clammy exterior of your

H. J.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

The allusions in the following are to articles by Mr. W. Morton Fullerton (in the *Times*) on the disastrous floods in Paris, and to Alfred de Musset's "Lettres d'amour à Aimée d'Alton."

Lamb House, Rye.

February 8th, 1910.

Dearest Edith,

I am in receipt of endless bounties from you and dazzling revelations about you: item: 1st: the grapes of Paradise that arrived yesterday in a bloom of purple and a burst of sweetness that made me—while they cast their Tyrian glamour about—ask more ruefully than ever what porridge poor *non-convalescent* John Keats mustn't have had: 2d: your exquisite appeal and approach to the good—the really admirable Skinner, who has now wrung tears of emotion from my eyes by bringing them to my knowledge: 3d: your gentle "holograph" letter, just to hand—which treats *my* stupid reflections on your own patience with such heavenly gentleness. When one is still sickish and shaky (though that, thank goodness, is steadily ebbing) one tumbles wrong—even when one has wanted to make the most delicate geste in life. But the great thing is that we always tumble together—more and more never apart; and that for that happy exercise and sweet coincidence of agility we may trust ourselves and each other to the end of time. So I gratefully grovel for everything—and for your beautiful and generous inquiry of Skinner . . . more than even anything else. The purple clusters are, none the less, of a prime magnificence and of an inexpressible relevance to my state. This is steadily bettering—thanks above all to three successive morning motor-rides that Skinner

has taken me, of an hour and a half each (to-day in fact nearly two hours), while he goes his rounds in a fairly far circuit over the country-side. I sit at cottage and farmhouse doors while he warns and comforts and commands within, and, these days having been mild and grey and convenient, the effect has been of the last benignity. I am thus exceedingly sustained. And also by the knowledge that you are not being wrenched from your hard-bought foyer and your neighbourhood to your best of brothers. Cramponnez-vous-y. I don't ask you about poor great Paris—I make out as I can by Morton's playing flashlight. And I read Walkley on Chantecler—which sounds rather like a glittering void. I have now dealt with Alfred and Aimée—unprofitable pair. What a strange and compromising French document—in this sense that it affects one as giving so many people and things away, by the simple fact of springing so characteristically and almost squalidly out of them. The letter in which Alf. arranges for her to come into his dirty bedroom at 8 a.m., while his mother and brother and others unknowingly *grouillent* on the other side of the cloison that shall make their *nid d'amour*, and *la façon dont elle y vole* react back even upon dear old George rather fatally—à-propos of dirty bedrooms, thin cloisons and the usual state of things, one surmises, at that hour. What an Aimée and what a Paul and what a Mme Jaubert and what an everything!

Ever your

H. J.

*To Miss Jessie Allen.*

The plan here projected of looking for a house in Eaton Terrace, where Miss Allen lived, was not carried further.

Lamb House, Rye.

February 20th, 1910.

My dear eternally martyred and murdered  
Goody,

I am horribly ashamed to have my poor hand forced (you see what it is and what it's reduced to) into piling up on your poor burdened consciousness the added load of *my* base woes (as if you weren't lying stretched flat beneath the pressure of your own and those of some special dozen or two of your most favourite and fatal vampires.) I proposed you should know nothing of mine till they were all over—if they ever *should* be (which they are not quite yet :) and that if one had to speak of them to you at all, it might thus be in the most pluperfect of all past tenses and twiddling one's fingers on the tip of one's nose, quite vulgarly, as to intimate that you were a day after the fair. . . . But why do I unfold this gruesome tale when just what I most want is *not* to wring your insanely generous heart or work upon your perversely exquisite sensibility? I am pulling through, and though I've been so often somewhat better only to find myself topple back into black despair—with bad, vilely bad, days after good ones, and not a *very* famous one to-day—I do feel that I have definitely turned the corner and got the fiend down, even though he still kicks as viciously as he can yet manage. I am “up” and dressed, and in short I *eat*—after a fashion, and have regained considerable weight (oh I had become the loveliest sylph,) and even,

I am told, a certain charm of appearance. My good nephew Harry James, priceless youth, my elder brother's eldest son, sailed from N.Y. yesterday to come out and see me—and that alone lifts up my heart—for I have felt a very lonesome and stranded old idiot. My conditions (of circumstance, house and care, &c) have on the other hand been excellent—my servants angels of affection and devotion. (I have indeed been *all* in Doctor's and Nurse's hands.) So don't take it hard now; take it utterly easy and allow your charity to stray a little by way of a change into your own personal premises. Take a look in *there* and let it even make you linger. To hear you are doing *that* will do me more good than anything else. . . .

I yearn unutterably to get on far enough to begin to plan to come up to town for a while. I have of late reacted intensely against this exile from some of the resources of civilization in winter—and deliriously dream of some future footing in London again (other than my club) for the space of time between Xmas or so and June. What is the rent of a house—unfurnished of course (a little good *inside* one)—in your Terrace?—and are there any with 2 or 3 servants' bedrooms?

Don't answer this absurdity now—but wait till we go and look at 2 or 3 together! Such is the recuperative yearning of your enfeebled but not beaten—you can see by this scrawl—old

H. J.

*To Mrs. Bigelow.*

Lamb House, Rye.

April 19th, 1910.

My dear Edith,

I have been much touched by your solicitude, but till now absolutely too "bad" to write—to do anything but helplessly, yearningly languish and suffer and surrender. I have had a perfect Hell of a Time—since just after Xmas—nearly 15 long weeks of dismal, dreary, interminable illness (with occasional slight pickings-up followed by black relapses.) But the tide, thank the Powers, has at last definitely turned and I am on the way to getting not only better, but, as I believe, creepily and abjectly well. I sent my Nurse (my second) flying the other day, after ten deadly weeks of her, and her predecessors's, aggressive presence and policy, and the mere relief from that overdone discipline has done wonders for me. I must have patience, much, yet—but my face is toward the light, which shows, beautifully, that I look ten years older, and with my bonny tresses ten degrees whiter (like Marie Antoinette's in the Conciergerie.) However if I've lost all my beauty and (by my expenses) most of my money, I rejoice I've kept my friends, and I shall come and show you *that* appreciation yet. I am so delighted that you and the Daughterling had your go at Italy—even though I was feeling so pre-eminently un-Italian. The worst of that Paradise is indeed that one returns but to Purgatories at the best. Have a little patience yet with your still struggling but all clinging

HENRY JAMES.



*To W. E. Norris.*

Hill Hall,  
Theydon Bois,  
Epping.  
May 22nd, 1910.

My dear Norris,

Forgive a very brief letter and a very sad one, in which I must explain long and complicated things in a very few words. I have had a dismal—the most dismal and interminable illness; going on these five months nearly, since Christmas—and of which the end is not yet; and of which all this later stage has been (these ten or twelve weeks) a development of nervous conditions (agitation, trepidation, black melancholia and weakness) of a—the most—formidable and distressing kind. My brother and sister-in-law most blessedly came on to me from America several weeks ago; without them I had—should have—quite gone under; and a week ago, under extreme medical urgency as to change of air, scene, food, everything, I came here with my sister-in-law—to some most kind friends and a beautiful place—as a very arduous experiment. But I'm too ill to be here really, and shall crawl home as soon as possible. I'm afraid I can't see you in London—I can plan nor do nothing; and can only ask you, in my weakness, depression and helplessness, to pardon this doleful story from your affectionate and afflicted old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Bittongs Hotel Hohenzollern,  
Bad Nauheim.  
June 10th, 1910.

Dearest Edith,

Your kindest note met me here on my arrival with my sister last evening. We are infinitely touched by the generous expression of it, but there had been, and could be, no question for us of Paris—formidable at best (that is in general) as a place of rapid transit. I had, to my sorrow, a baddish drop on coming back from high Epping Forest (that is “Theydon Mount”) to poor little flat and stale and illness-haunted Rye—and I felt, my Dr. strongly urging, safety to be in a prompt escape by the straightest way (Calais, Brussels, Cologne, and Frankfort,) to this place of thick woods, groves, springs and general Kurort soothingness, where my brother had been for a fortnight waiting us alone. Here I am then and having made the journey, in great heat, far better than I feared. Slowly but definitely I *am* emerging—yet with nervous possibilities still too latent, too in ambush, for me to do anything but cling for as much longer as possible to my Brother and sister. I am wholly unfit to be alone—in spite of amelioration. That (being alone) I can’t even as yet think of—and yet feel that I must for many months to come have none of the complications of society. In fine, to break to you the monstrous truth, I have taken my passage with them to America by the Canadian Pacific Steamer line (“short sea”) on August 12th—to spend the winter in America. I must break with everything—of the last couple of years in England—

and am trying if possible to let Lamb House for the winter—also am giving up my London perch. When I come back I must have a better. There are the grim facts—but now that I have accepted them I see hope and reason in them. I feel that the completeness of the change là-bas will help me more than anything else can—and the amount of corners I have already turned (though my nervous spectre still again and again scares me) is a kind of earnest of the rest of the process. I cling to my companions even as a frightened cry-baby to his nurse and protector—but of all that it is depressing, almost degrading to speak. This place is insipid, yet soothing—very bosky and sedative and admirably arranged, à l'allemande—but with excessive and depressing heat just now, and a toneless air at the best. The admirable ombrages and walks and pacifying pitch of life make up, however, for much. We shall be here for three weeks longer (I seem to *entrevoir*) and then try for something Swiss and tonic. We must be in England by Aug. 1st.

And now I simply *fear* to challenge you on your own complications. I can *bear* tragedies so little. Tout se rattache so à *the* thing—the central depression. And yet I want so to know—and I think of you with infinite tenderness, participation—and such a large and helpless devotion. Well, we must hold on tight and we shall come out again face to face—wiser than ever before (if that's any advantage!) This address, I foresee, will find me for the next 15 days—and we might be worse abrités. Germany has become *comfortable*. Note that much as I yearn to you, I don't nag you with categorical (even though in Germany) questions. . . . Ever your unspeakable, dearest Edith,

HENRY JAMES.

To Mrs. Wharton.

Lamb House, Rye.

July 29th, 1910.

Dearest Edith,

It's intense joy to hear from you, and when I think that the last news I gave you of myself was at Nauheim (it seems to me), with the nightmare of Switzerland that followed—"Munich and the Tyrol etc.," which I believe I then hinted at to you, proved the vainest crazy dream of but a moment—I feel what the strain and stress of the sequel that awaited me really became. That dire ordeal (attempted Nach-Kurs for my poor brother at *low* Swiss altitudes, Constance, Zurich, Lucerne, Geneva, &c.) terminated however a fortnight ago—or more—and after a bad week in London we are here waiting to sail on Aug. 12th. I am definitely much better, and on the road to be *well*; a great gain has come to me, in spite of everything, during the last ten days in particular. I say in spite of everything, for my dear brother's condition, already so bad on leaving the treacherous and disastrous Nauheim, has gone steadily on to worse—he is painfully ill, weak and down, and the anxiety of it, with our voyage in view, is a great tension to me in my still quite *struggling* upward state. But I stand and hold my ground none the less, and we have really brought him on since we left London. But the dismalness of it all—and of the sudden death, a fortnight ago, of our younger brother in the U.S. by heart-failure in his sleep—a painless, peaceful, enviable end to a stormy and unhappy career—makes our common situation, all these months back and now, fairly tragic and miserable. However, I am convinced that his getting home, if it can

be securely done, will do much for William—and I am myself now on a much “higher plane” than I expected a very few weeks since to be. I kind of *want*, uncannily, to go to America too—apart from several absolutely imperative reasons for it. I rejoice unspeakably in the vision of seeing you . . . here—or even in London or at Windsor—one of these very next days. . . .

Ever your all-affectionate, dear Edith,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Bruce Porter.*

The “*bêtises*” were certain Baconian clues to the authorship of Shakespeare’s plays, which Mr. Bruce Porter had come from America to investigate.

Lamb House, Rye.

[August 1910.]

My dear—very!—Bruce,

I rejoice to hear from you even though it entails the irritation (I brutally showed you, in town, my accessibility to that) of your misguided search for a sensation. You renew my harmless rage—for I hate to see you associated (with my firm affection for you) with the most provincial *bêtises*, and to have come so far to do it—to *be* it (given over to a, to *the* *Bêtise*!) in a fine finished old England with which one can have so much better relations, and so many of them—it would make me blush, or bleed, for you, could anything you do cause me a really *deep* discomfort. But nothing can—I too tenderly look the other way. So there we are. Besides, you have *had* your measles—and, though you might have been better employed, go in peace—be measly no more. At any rate I grossly want you to know that I am really ever so much better than when we were together in

London. I go on quite as well as I could decently hope. It's an ineffable blessing. It's horrible somehow that those brief moments shall have been all our meeting here, and that a desert wider than the sea shall separate us over there; but this is a part of that perversity in life which long ago gave me the ultimate ache, and I cherish the memory of our scant London luck. My brother, too, has taken a much better turn—and we sail on the 12th definitely. So rejoice with me and believe me, my dear Bruce, all affectionately yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Grace Norton.*

Chocorua, New Hampshire.

August 26, 1910.

Dearest Grace,

I am deeply touched by your tender note—and all the more that we have need of tenderness, in a special degree, here now. We arrived, William and Alice and I, in this strange, sad, rude spot, a week ago to-night—after a most trying journey from Quebec (though after a most beautiful, quick, in itself auspicious voyage too,) but with William critically, mortally ill and with our anxiety and tension now (he has rapidly got so much worse) a real anguish. . . . Alice is terribly exhausted and spent—but the rest she will be able to take must presently increase, and Harry, who, after leaving us at Quebec, started with a friend on a much-needed holiday in the New Brunswick woods (for shooting and fishing), was wired to yesterday to come back to us at once. So I give you, dear Grace, our dismal chronicle of suspense and pain. My own fears are the blackest, and at the prospect of losing my wonderful beloved brother out of the

world in which, from as far back as in dimmest childhood, I have so yearningly always counted on him, I feel nothing but the abject weakness of grief and even terror; but I forgive myself "weakness"—my emergence from the long and grim ordeal of my own peculiarly dismal and trying illness isn't yet absolutely complete enough to make me wholly firm on my feet. But *my* slowly recuperative process goes on despite all shakes and shocks, while dear William's, in the full climax of his intrinsic powers and intellectual ambitions, meets this tragic, cruel arrest. However, dear Grace, I won't further wail to you in my nervous soreness and sorrow—still, in spite of so much revival, more or less under the shadow as I am of the miserable, damnable year that began for me last Christmas-time and for which I had been spoiling for two years before. I will only wait to see you—with all the tenderness of our long, unbroken friendship and all the host of our common initiations. I have come for a long stay—though when we shall be able to plan for a resumption of life in Irving Street is of course insoluble as yet. Then, at all events, with what eagerness your threshold will be crossed by your faithfullest old

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. It's to-day blessedly cooler here—and I hope you also have the reprieve!

P.S. I open my letter of three hours since to add that William passed unconsciously away an hour ago—without apparent pain or struggle. Think of us, dear Grace, think of us!

*To Thomas Sergeant Perry.*

Chocorua, N.H.

Sept. 2nd, 1910.

My dear old Thomas,

I sit heavily stricken and in darkness— for from far back in dimmest childhood he had been my ideal Elder Brother, and I still, through all the years, saw in him, even as a small timorous boy yet, my protector, my backer, my authority and my pride. His extinction changes the face of life for me—besides the mere missing of his inexhaustible company and personality, originality, the whole unspeakably vivid and beautiful presence of him. And his noble intellectual vitality was still but at its climax—he had two or three ardent purposes and plans. He had cast them away, however, at the end—I mean that, dreadfully suffering, he wanted only to die. Alice and I had a bitter pilgrimage with him from far off—he sank here, on his threshold; and then it went horribly fast. I cling for the present to *them*—and so try to stay here through this month. After that I shall be with them in Cambridge for several more—we shall cleave more together. I should like to come and see you for a couple of days much, but it would have to be after the 20th, or even October 1st, I think; and I fear you may not then be still in villeggiatura. *If* so I *will* come. You knew him—among those living now—from furthest back with me. Yours and Lilla's all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.



*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Chocorua, N.H.

Sept. 9th, 1910.

Dearest Edith,

Your letter from Annecy . . . touches me, as I sit here stricken and in darkness, with the tenderest of hands. It was all to become again a black nightmare (what seems to me such now,) from very soon after I left you, to these days of attempted readjustment of life, on the basis of my beloved brother's irredeemable absence from it, in which I take my part with my sister-in-law and his children here. I quitted you at Folkestone, August 9th (just a month ago to-day—and it seems six!) to find him, at Lamb House, apparently not a little eased by the devoted Skinner, and with the elements much more auspicious for our journey than they had been a fortnight before. We got well enough to town on the 11th, and away from it, to Liverpool, on the 12th, and the voyage, in the best accommodations &c we had ever had at sea, and of a wondrous lakelike and riverlike fairness and brevity, might, if he had been really less ill, have made for his holding his ground. But he grew rapidly worse again from the start and suffered piteously and dreadfully (with the increase of his difficulty in breathing;) and we got him at last to this place (on the evening of the Friday following that of our sailing) only to see him begin swiftly to sink. The sight of the rapidity of it at the last was an unutterable pang—my sense of what he had still to *give*, of his beautiful genius and noble intellect at their very climax, never having been anything but intense, and in fact having been intenser than ever all these last months. However, my relation

to him and my affection for him, and the different aspect his extinction has given for me to my life, are all unutterable matters; fortunately, as there would be so *much* to say about them if I said anything at all. The effect of it all is that I shall stay on here for the present—for some months to come (I mean in this country;) and then return to England never to revisit these shores again. I am inexpressibly glad to have been, and even to be, here now—I cling to my sister-in-law and my nephews and niece: they are all (wonderful to say) such admirable, lovable, able and interesting persons, and they cling to me in return. I hope to be in this spot with them till Oct. 15th—there is a great appeal in it from its saturation with my brother's presence and life here, his use and liking of it for 23 years, a sad subtle consecration which plays out the more where so few other things interfere with it. Ah, the thin, empty, lonely, melancholy American "beauty"—which I yet find a cold prudish charm in! I shall go back to Cambridge with my companions and stay there at least till the New Year—which is all that seems definite for the present. . . .

All devotedly yours, dearest Edith,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Charles Hunter.*

Chocorua, N.H.

Oct: 1: 1910.

Dearest Mary Hunter,

Beautiful and tender the letter I just receive from you—and that follows by a few days an equally beneficent one to my sister. She will (if she hasn't done it already) thank you for this herself—and tell you how deeply we feel the kindly balm of your faithful thought

of us. Our return here, with my brother so acutely suffering and so all too precipitately (none the less) succumbing altogether—quite against what seemed presumable during our last three weeks in England—was a dreadful time; from the worst darkness of which we are, however, gradually emerging. . . . What is for the time a great further support is the wondrous beauty of this region, where we are lingering on three or four weeks more (when it becomes too cold in a house built only for summer—in spite of glorious wood-fires;) this season being the finest thing in the American year for weather and colour. The former is golden and the latter, amid these innumerable mountains and great forests and frequent lakes, a magnificence of crimson and orange, a mixture of flames and gems. I shall stay for some months (I mean on this side of the sea;) and yet I am so homesick that I seem to feel that when I do get back to dear little old England, I shall never in my life leave it again. We cling to each other, all of us here, meanwhile, and I can never be sufficiently grateful to my fate for my having been with my dearest brother for so many weeks before his death and up to the bitter end. I am better and better than three months ago, thank heaven, in spite of everything, and really believe I shall end by being better than I have been at all these last years, when I was spoiling for my illness. I pray most devoutly that Salso will again repay and refresh and comfort you; I absolutely yearn to see you, and I am yours all affectionately always,

HENRY JAMES.

To Mrs. W. K. Clifford.

95 Irving Street,  
Cambridge, Mass.

October 29th, 1910.

Dearest Lucy !

My silence has been atrocious, since the receipt of two quite divine letters from you, but the most particular blessing of you is that with you one needn't explain nor elaborate nor take up the burden of dire demonstration, because you understand and you feel, you allow, and you *know*, and above all you love (your poor old entangled and afflicted H. J.). . . . Now at last I am really on the rise and on the higher ground again—more than I have been, and more unmistakeably, than at any time since the first of my illness. Your letters meanwhile, dearest Lucy, were admirable and exquisite, in their rare beauty of your knowing, for the appreciation of such a loss and such a wound, immensely what you were talking about. Every word went to my heart, and it was as if you sat by me and held my hand and let me wail, and wailed yourself, so gently and intelligently, *with* me. The extinction of such a presence in my life as my great and radiant (even in suffering and sorrow) brother's, means a hundred things that I can't begin to say; but immense, all the same, are the abiding possessions, the interest and the honour. We will talk of all these things by your endlessly friendly fire in due time again (oh how I gnash my teeth with homesickness at that dear little Chilworth St. vision of old lamplit gossiping hours!) and we will pull together meanwhile as intimately and unitedly as possible even thus across the separating sea. I have pretty well settled to remain on this side of that

wintry obstacle till late in the spring. I am at present with my priceless sister-in-law and her dear delightful children. We came back a short time since from the country (I going for ten days to New York, the prodigious, from which I have just returned, while she, after her so long and tragic absence, settled us admirably for the winter.) We all hang unspeakably together, and that's why I am staying. I am getting back to work—though the flood of letters to be breasted by reason of my brother's death and situation has been formidable in the extreme, and the "breasting" (with the very weak hand only that I have been able till now to lend) is even yet far from over. My companions are unspeakably kind to me, and I cherish the break in the excess of solitude that I have been steeped in these last years. If I get as "well" as I see reason now at last to believe, I shall be absolutely better than at any time for three or four—and shall even feel sweetly younger (by a miraculous emergence from my hideous year.) Dreams of work come back to me—which I've a superstitious dread still, however, of talking about. Materially and carnally speaking my "comfort"—odious word!—in a most pleasant, commodious house, is absolute, and is much fostered by my having brought with me my devoted if diminutive Burgess, whom you will remember at Lamb House. . . . During all which time, however, see how I don't prod you with questions about yourself—in spite of my burning thirst for knowledge. After the generosity of your letters of last month how can I ask you to labour again in my too thankless cause? But I do yearn over you, and I needn't tell you how any rough sketch of your late history will gladden my sight. I wrote a day or two ago to Hugh Walpole and besought him to go and see you

and make me some sign of you—which going and gathering-in I hope he of himself, and constantly, takes to. I think of you as always heroic—but I hope that no particular extra need for it has lately salted your cup. Is Margaret on better ground again? God grant it! But such things as I wish to talk about—I mean that we *might*! But with patience the hour will strike—like silver smiting silver. Till then I am so far-offishly and so affectionately yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To W. E. Norris.*

95 Irving St.  
Cambridge, Mass.  
Dec. 13th, 1910.

My dear Norris,

I detest the thought that some good word or other from me shouldn't add to the burden with which your Xmas table will groan; fortunately too the decently "good" word (as goods go at this dark crisis) is the one that I *can* break my long and hideous silence to send you. The only difficulty is that when silences have been so long and so hideous the renewal of the communication, the patching-up (as regards the mere facts) of the weakened and ragged link, becomes in itself a necessity, or a question, formidable even to deterrence. I have had verily an *année terrible*—the fag-end of which is, however, an immense improvement on everything that has preceded it. I won't attempt, none the less, to make up arrears of information in any degree whatever—but simply let off at you this rude but affectionate signal from the desert-island of my shipwreck—or what would

be such if my situation were not, on the whole, the one with which I am for the present most in tune. I am staying on here with my dear and admirable sister-in-law and her children, with whom I have been ever since my beloved and illustrious elder brother's death in the country at the end of August. . . . My younger brother had died just a month before—and I am alone now, of my father's once rather numerous house. But there—I am trying to pick up lost chords—which is what I didn't mean to . . . I expect to stick fast here through January and then go for a couple of months to New York—after which I shall begin to turn my face to England—heaven send that day! The detail of this is, however, fluid and subject to alteration—in everything save my earnest purpose of struggling back by April or May at furthest to your (or verily *my*) distressed country; for which I unceasingly languish. . . . The material conditions here (that is the best of them—others intensely and violently *not*) suit me singularly at present; as for instance the great and glorious American fact of weather, to which it all mainly comes back, but which, since last August here, I have never known anything to surpass. While I write you this I bask in golden December sunshine and dry, crisp, mild frost—over a great *nappe* of recent snow, which flushes with the “tenderest” lights. This does me a world of good—and the fact that I have brought with me my little Lamb House servant, who has lived with me these 10 years; but for the rest my life is exclusively in this one rich nest of old affections and memories. I put you, you see, no questions, but please find half a dozen very fond ones wrapped up in every good wish I send you for the coming year. A couple of nos. of the *Times* have just come in—and though the tele-

graph has made them rather ancient history I hang over them for the dear old more vivid sense of it all. . . .

Yours, my dear Norris, all affectionately,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

95 Irving Street,  
Cambridge, Mass.

Feb. 9th, 1911.

Dearest Edith,

Hideous and infamous, yes, my interminable, my abjectly graceless silence. But it always comes, in these abnormal months, from the same sorry little cause, which I have already named to you to such satiety that I really might omit any further reference to it. Somehow, none the less, I find a vague support in my consciousness of an unsurpassable abjection (as aforesaid) in naming it once more *to myself* and putting afresh on record that there's a method in what I feel might pass for my madness if *you* weren't so nobly sane. To write is perforce *to report of myself* and my condition—and nothing has happened to make that process any less an evil thing. It's horrible to me to report darkly and dismally—and yet I never venture three steps in the opposite direction without having the poor effrontery flung back in my face as an outrage on the truth. In other words, to report favourably is instantly—or at very short order—to be hurled back on the couch of anguish—so that the only thing has, for the most part, been to stay my pen rather than *not* report favourably. You'll say doubtless: "Damn you, why report *at all*—if you are so crassly superstitious? Answer civilly and prettily and punctually when a lady (and 'such a lady,' as Browning says!) generously and à deux reprises



writes to you—without ‘dragging in Velasquez’ at all.” Very well then, I’ll try—though it was after all pretty well poor old Velasquez who came back three evenings since from 23 days in New York, and at 21 East 11th St., of which the last six were practically spent in bed. He had had a very fairly flourishing fortnight in that kindest of houses and tenderest of cares and genialest of companies—and then repaid it all by making himself a burden and a bore. I got myself out of the way as soon as possible—by scrambling back here; and yet, all inconsequently, I think it likely I shall return there in March to perform the same evolution. In the intervals I quite take notice—but at a given moment everything temporarily goes. I come up again and quite well up—as how can I not in order again to re-taste the bitter cup? But here I *am* “reporting of myself” with a vengeance—forgive me if it’s too dreary. When all’s said and done it will eventually—the whole case—become less so. Meanwhile, too, for my consolation, I have picked up here and there wind-borne *bribes*, of a more or less authentic savour, from your own groaning board; and my poor old imagination does me in these days no better service than by enabling me to hover, like a too-participant larbin, behind your Louis XIV chair (if it isn’t, your chair, Louis Quatorze, at least your larbin takes it so.) I gather you’ve been able to drive the spirited pen without cataclysms. . . . I take unutterable comfort in the thought that two or three months hence you’ll probably be seated on the high-piled and *done* book—in the magnificent authority of the position, even as Catherine II on the throne of the Czars. (Forgive the implications of the comparison!) Work seems far from *me* yet—though perhaps a few inches nearer. A report

even reaches me to the effect that there's a possibility of your deciding . . . to come over and spend the summer at the Mount, and this is above all a word to say that in case you should do so at all betimes you will probably still see me here; as though I have taken my passage for England my date is only the 14th June. Therefore should you come May 1st—well, Porphyro grows faint! I yearn over this—since if you shouldn't come then (and yet should be coming at all,) heaven knows when we shall meet again. There are enormous reasons for my staying here till then, and enormous ones against my staying longer.

Such, dearest Edith, is my meagre budget—forgive me if it isn't brighter and richer. I am but *just* pulling through—and I am doing *that*, but no more, and so, you see, have no wild graces or wavy tendrils left over for the image I project. I shall try to *grow* some again, little by little; but for the present am as ungarnished in every way as an aged plucked fowl before the cook has dealt with him. May the great Chef see his way to serve me up to you some day in some better sauce! As I am, at any rate, share me generously with your I am sure not infrequent commensaux . . . and ask them to make the best of me (an' they love me—as I love *them*) even if you give them only the drumsticks and keep the comparatively tender, though much shrivelled, if once mighty, “pinion” for yourself . . . I saw no one of the least “real fascination” (*excusez du peu* of the conception!) in N.Y.—but the place relieved and beguiled me—so long as I was *debout*—and Mary Cadwal and Beatrix were as tenderest nursing mother and bonniest *sœur de lait* to me the whole day long. I really think I shall take—shall risk—another go of it before long

again, and even snatch a "bite" of Washington (Washington pie, as we used to say,) to which latter the dear H. Whites have most kindly challenged me. Well, such, dearest Edith, are the short and simple annals of the poor! I hang about you, however inarticulately, de toutes les forces de mon être and am always your fondly faithful old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Rhoda Broughton.*

95 Irving Street,  
Cambridge, Mass.  
February 25th, 1911.

Dear Rhoda Broughton,

I hate, and have hated all along, the accumulation of silence and darkness in the once so bright and animated air of our ancient commerce—that is our old and so truly valid friendship; and I am irresistibly moved to strike a fresh light, as it were, and sound a hearty call—so that the uncanny spell may break (working, as it has done, so much by my own fault, or my great infirmity.) I have just had a letter from dear Mary Clarke, not overflowing with any particularly blest tidings, and containing, as an especial note of the minor key, an allusion to your apparently aggravated state of health and rather captive condition. This has caused a very sharp pang in my battered breast—for steadily battered I have myself been, battered all round and altogether, these long months and months past: even if not to the complete extinction of a tender sense for the woes of others.

. . . I tell you my sorry tale, please believe me, not to harrow you up or "work upon" you—under the harrow as you have yourself been so cruelly condemned to sit; but only

because when one has been long useless and speechless and graceless, and when one's poor powers then again begin to reach out for exercise, one immensely wants a few persons to know that one hasn't been basely indifferent or unaware, but simply gagged, so to speak, and laid low—simply helpless and reduced to naught. And then my desire has been great to talk with you, and I even feel that I am doing so a little through this pale and limping substitute—and such are some of the cheerful points I should infallibly have made *had* I been—or were I just now—face to face with you. Heaven speed the day for some occasion more *like* that larger and braver contact than these ineffectual accents. Such are the prayers with which I beguile the tedium of vast wastes of homesickness here—where, frankly, the sense of aching exile attends me the live-long day, and resists even the dazzle of such days as these particular ones happen to be—a glory of golden sunshine and air both crisp and soft, that pours itself out in unstinted floods and would transfigure and embellish the American scene to my jaundiced eye if anything *could*. But better fifty years of fogland—where indeed I have, alas, almost *had* my fifty years! However, count on me to at least *try* to put in a few more.

. . . I hear from Howard Sturgis, and I hear, that is *have* heard, from W. E. Norris; but so have you, doubtless, oftener and more cheeringly than I: all such communications seem to me today in the very minor key indeed—in which respect they match my own (you at least will say!) But I don't dream of your "answering" this—it pretends to all the purity of absolutely disinterested affection. I only wish I could fold up in it some even faint reflection of the flood of golden winter sunshine, some breath of

the still, mild, already vernal air that wraps me about here (as I just mentioned,) while I write, and reminds me that grim and prim Boston is after all in the latitude of Rome—though indeed only to mock at the aching impatience of your all faithful, forth-reaching old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To H. G. Wells.*

95 Irving Street,  
Cambridge, Mass.  
March 3rd, 1911.

My dear Wells,

I seem to have had notice from my house-keeper at Rye that you have very kindly sent me there a copy of the *New Machiavelli*—which she has forborne to forward me to these tariff-guarded shores; in obedience to my general instructions. But this needn't prevent me from thanking you for the generous gift, which will keep company with a brave row of other such valued signs of your remembrance at Lamb House; thanking you all the more too that I hadn't waited for gift or guerdon to fall on you and devour you, but have just lately been finding the American issue of your wondrous book a sufficient occasion for that. Thus it is that I can't rest longer till I make you some small sign at last of my conscious indebtedness.

I have read you then, I need scarcely tell you, with an intensified sense of that life and force and temperament, that fulness of endowment and easy impudence of genius, which makes you extraordinary and which have long claimed my unstinted admiration: you being for me so much the most interesting and masterful prose-painter of your English generation (or indeed of your generation unqualified) that I see you

hang there over the subject scene practically all alone; a far-flaring even though turbid and smoky lamp, projecting the most vivid and splendid golden splotches, *creating* them about the field—shining scattered innumerable morsels of a huge smashed mirror. I seem to feel that there can be no better proof of your great gift—*The N.M.* makes me most particularly feel it—than that you bedevil and coerce to the extent you do such a reader and victim as I am, I mean one so engaged on the side of ways and attempts to which yours are extremely alien, and for whom the great interest of the art we practise involves a lot of considerations and preoccupations over which you more and more ride roughshod and triumphant—when you don't, that is, with a strange and brilliant impunity of your own, leave them to one side altogether (which *is* indeed what you now apparently incline most to do.) Your big feeling for life, your capacity for chewing up the thickness of the world in such enormous mouthfuls, while you fairly slobber, so to speak, with the multitudinous taste—this constitutes for me a rare and wonderful and admirable exhibition, on your part, in itself, so that one should doubtless frankly ask one's self what the devil, in the way of effect and evocation and general demonic activity, one wants more. Well, I am willing for to-day to let it stand at that; the whole of the earlier part of the book, or the first half, is so alive and kicking—and sprawling!—so vivid and rich and strong—above all so *amusing* (in the high sense of the word,) and I make remonstrance—for I do remonstrate—bear upon the bad service you have done your cause by riding so hard again that accurst autobiographic form which puts a premium on the loose, the improvised, the cheap and the easy. Save in the fantastic and the romantic (Copperfield,

Jane Eyre, that charming thing of Stevenson's with the bad title—"Kidnapped"?) it has no authority, no persuasive or convincing force—its grasp of reality and truth isn't strong and disinterested. R. Crusoe, e.g., isn't a novel at all. (There is, to my vision, no authentic, and no really interesting and no *beautiful*, report of things on the novelist's, the painter's part unless a particular detachment has operated, unless the great stewpot or crucible of the imagination, of the observant and recording and interpreting mind in short, has intervened and played its part—and this detachment, this chemical transmutation for the aesthetic, the representational, end is terribly wanting in autobiography brought, as the horrible phrase is, up to date.) [That's my main "criticism" on the *N.M.*—and on the whole ground there would be a hundred things more to say. It's accurst that I am not near enough to you to say them in less floundering fashion than this—but give me time (I return to England in June, never again, D.V., to leave it—surprise Mr. Remington thereby as I may!) and we will jaw as far as you will keep me company. Meanwhile I don't *want* to send across the wintry sea anything but my expressed gratitude for the immense impressionistic and speculative wealth and variety of your book. Yours, my dear Wells, ever,

HENRY JAMES.

Ⓟ P.S. I think the exhibition of "Love" as "Love"—functional Love—always suffers from a certain inevitable and insurmountable flat-footedness (for the reader's nerves etc. ; ) which is only to be counterplotted by roundabout arts—as by tracing it through indirectness and tortuosities of application and effect—to keep it somehow

interesting and productive (though I don't mean reproductive!) But this again is a big subject.

*P.S.2.* I am like your hero's forsaken wife: I know *having* things (the things of life, history, the world) only as, and by, *keeping* them. So, and so only, I *do* have them!

*To C. E. Wheeler.*

"The Outcry" had not appeared on the stage, but was shortly to be published in the form of a narrative. The following refers to a suggestion, not carried further at this time, that the play might be performed by the Stage Society.

21 East Eleventh Street,  
New York City.  
April 9th, 1911.

Dear Christopher Wheeler,

I am *not* back in England, as you see, and shall not be till toward the end of June. I have *almost* recovered from the very compromised state in which my long illness of last year left me, but not absolutely and wholly. I am, however, in a very much better way, and the rest is a question of more or less further patience and prudence. About the "Outcry," in the light of your plan, I am afraid that the moment isn't favourable for me to discuss or decide. I have made a disposition, a "literary use," of that work (so as not to have to view it as merely wasted labour on the one hand and not sickeningly to hawk it about on the other) which isn't propitious to any other *present* dealing with it—though it might not (in fact certainly wouldn't) [be unfavourable] to some eventual theatrical life for it. Before I do anything else I must first see what shall come of the application I have made of my play. This, you see, is a



practically unhelpful answer to your interesting inquiry, and I am sorry the actual situation so limits the matter. I rejoice in your continued interest in the theatrical question, and I dare say your idea as to a repertory effort on the lines you mention is a thing of light and life. But I have little heart or judgment left, as I grow older, for the mere *theatrical* mystery: the drama interests me as much as ever, but I see the theatre-experiment of this, that or the other supposedly enlightened kind prove, all round me, so abysmally futile and fallacious and treacherous that I am practically quite "off" from it and can but let it pass. Pardon my weary cynicism—and try me again later. The conditions—the theatre-question generally—in this country are horrific and unspeakable—utter; and so far as I can see irreclaimable, barbarism reigns. The anomalous fact is that the theatre, so called, can flourish in barbarism, but that any *drama* worth speaking of can develop but in the air of civilization. However, keep tight hold of your clue and believe me yours ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Dr. J. William White.*

95 Irving Street,  
Cambridge, Mass.

May 12th, 1911.

My dear J. William,

I have from far back so dragged you, and the gentle Letitia even, not less, through the deep dark desperate discipline of my unmatched genius for not being quick on the epistolary trigger, that, with such a perfection of schooling—quite my prize pupils and little show performers in short—I can be certain that you won't so much as have turned a hair under

my recent probably unsurpassed exhibitions of it. Nevertheless I shall expect you to sit up and look bright and gratified (even quite intelligent—like true heads of the class) now that I do write and reward your exemplary patience and beautiful drill. Yes, dear prize pupils, I feel I can fully depend on you to regard the present as a “regular answer” to your sweet letter from Bermuda; or to behave, beautifully, as if you *did*—which comes to the same thing. Above all I can trust you to believe that if *your* discipline has been stiff, that of your battered and tattered old disciplinarian himself has been stiffer—incessant and uninterrupted and really not leaving him a moment’s attention for anything else. He is still very limp and bewildered with it all—yet with a gleam of better things ahead, that after his dire and interminable ordeal, and though the gleam has but just broken out, causes him to turn to you again with that fond fidelity which enjoyed its liveliest expression, in the ancient past, on the day, never to be forgotten, when we had such an affectionate scuffle to get ahead of each other in making a joyous bonfire of Lamb House in honour of your so acclaimed arrival there: Letitia sitting by, with her impartial smile, as the queen of beauty at a Tournament. (She will remember how she crowned the victor—I modestly forbear to name him: and what a ruinously—to *him*—genial *feu de joie* resulted from the expensive application of my brandished torch.) Well, the upshot of it all is that I have put off my sailing by the Mauretania of June 14th—but not alas to your Olympic, vessel of the gods, evidently, later that month. I have shifted to the same Mauretania of August 2nd—urgent and intimate family reasons making for my stop-over till then. So when I see you in England,

as I fondly count on doing after this dismal interlude, it will be during the delightful weeks you will spend there in the autumn, when all your athletic laurels have been gathered, all your high-class hotels checked off, all your obedient servants (except me!) tipped, and all your portentous drafts honoured. Let us plot out those sweet September days a little even now—let *me* at least dream of them as a supreme test, proof and consecration, of what returning health will once more enable me to stand. I am too unutterably glad to be going back even with a further delay—I am wasted to a shadow (even though the shadow of a still formidable mass) by homesickness (for the home I once had—before we applied the match. You see the loss for you *now*—by the way: if you had only allowed it to stand!) I have taken places in the Reform Gallery “for the coronation”—and won them by ballot—for the second procession: and now palmed them off on two of my female victims—after *such* a quandary in the choice! Apropos of coronations and such-like, won't you, when you write, very kindly give me some news of the dear dashing Abbeys, long lost to sight and sound of me? It has come round to me in vague ways that they have at last actually left Morgan Hall for some newly-acquired princely estate: do you know where and what the place is? A gentle word on this head would immensely assuage my curiosity. Wherever and whatever it is, let us stay there together next September! You see therefore how practical my demand is. Of course Ned will paint this coronation too—while his hand is in. And oh you should be here now to share a holy rage with me. . . . Such is this babyish democracy.

Ever your grand, yet attached old aristocrat,

HENRY JAMES.

*To T. Bailey Saunders.*

Barack-Matiff Farm,  
Salisbury, Conn.

May 27th, 1911.

My dear Bailey,

It greatly touches and gratifies me to hear from you—even though I have to inflict on you the wound of a small announced (positively last) postponement of my re-appearance. I *like* to think that you may be a little wounded—wanton as that declaration sounds; for it gives me the measure of my being cared for in poor dear old distracted England—than which there can be no sweeter or more healing sense to my bruised and aching and oh so nostalgic soul. . . . I am exceedingly better in health, I thank the “powers”—and even presume to figure it out that I shall next slip between the soft swing-doors of Athene in the character of a confirmed improver, struggler upward, or even bay-crowned victor over ills. Don't lament my small procrastination—a matter of only six weeks; for I shall then still better know where and how I am. I am at the present hour (more literally) staying with some amiable cousins, of the more amiable sex—supposedly at least (my supposition is not about the cousins, but about the sex)—in the deep warm heart of “New England at its best.” This large Connecticut scenery of mountain and broad vale, recurrent great lake and splendid river (the great Connecticut itself, the Housatonic, the Farmington,) all embowered with truly prodigious elms and maples, is very noble and charming and sympathetic, and made—on its great scale of extent—to be dealt with by the blest motor-car, the consolation of my declining years. This luxury I am charitably much treated

to, and it does me a world of good. The enormous, the unique ubiquity of the "auto" here suggests many reflections—but I can't go into these now, or into any branch of the prodigious economic or "sociological" side of this unspeakable and amazing country; I must keep such matters to regale you withal in poor dear little Lamb House garden; for one brick of the old battered purple wall of which I would give at this instant (home-sick *quand même*) the whole bristling state of Connecticut. I shall "stay about" till I embark—that may represent to you my temperamental or other gain. However, you must autobiographically regale me not a bit less than yours, my dear Bailey, all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Sir T. H. Warren.*

The following letter to the President of Magdalen refers to the offer of an honorary degree at Oxford, subsequently conferred in 1912.

Salisbury, Connecticut.

May 29th, 1911.

My dear President,

I was more sorry than I can say to have to cable you last evening in that disabled sense. I had some time ago taken my return passage to England for June 14th, but more lately the President of Harvard was so good as to invite me to receive an Honorary Degree at their hands on the 28th of that month—the same day as your *Encaenia*. Urgent and intimate family reasons conspired to make a delay advisable; so I accepted the Harvard invitation and have shifted my departure to August 2nd.

Behold me thus committed to Harvard—and unable moreover at this season of the multitudinous (I mean of the rush to Europe) to get

a decent berth on an outward ship even were I to try. The formal document from the University arrived with your kind letter—proposing to me the Degree of Doctor of Letters, as your letter mentions; and quickened my great regret at being thus perversely prevented from embracing an occasion the appeal of which I might so have connected with your benevolence.

I should feel an Oxford degree a very great honour and a great consideration, and I am writing of course to the Registrar of the University. I rejoice to be going back at last to a more immediate—or more possible—sight and sound of you and of all your surrounding amenities and glories. Yet I wish too I could open to you for a few days the impression of the things about me here; in the warm, the very warm, heart of “New England at its best,” such a vast abounding Arcadia of mountains and broad vales and great rivers and large lakes and white villages embowered in prodigious elms and maples. It is extraordinarily beautiful and graceful and idyllic—for America. . . .

I am very sincerely and faithfully and gratefully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Ellen Emmet.*

Mrs. George Hunter and her daughters had been H. J.'s hostesses at Salisbury, Connecticut, in the preceding May.

Lamb House, Rye.

Aug. 15th, 1911.

Beloved dearest darling Bay!

Your so beautifully human letter of Aug. 1st reaches me here this a.m. through Harry—who appears to have picked it out of perdition at the Belmont after I had sailed (at peep of

dawn) on Aug. 2nd. It deeply and exquisitely touches me—so bowed down under the shame of my long silence to all your House, to your splendid mother in particular, have I remained ever since the day I brought my little visit to you to a heated close—which sounds absurdly as if I had left you in a rage after a violent discussion. But you will know too well what I mean and how the appalling summer that was even then beginning so actively to cook for us could only prove a well-nigh fatal dish to your aged and infirm uncle. I met the full force of this awful and almost (to the moment I sailed) unbroken visitation just after leaving you—and, frankly, it simply demoralized me and flattened me out. Manners, memories, decencies, all alike fell from me and I simply lay for long weeks a senseless, stricken, perspiring, inconsiderate, unclothed mass. I expected and desired nothing but to melt utterly away—and could only treat my nearest and dearest as if *they* expected and desired no more. I am convinced that you all didn't and that you noticed not at all that I had become a most ungracious and uncommunicative recipient of your bounty. I lived from day to day, most of the time in my bath, and please tell your mother that when I thought of you it was to say to myself, "oh, they're all up to their necks together in their Foxhunter spring, and it would be really indiscreet to break in upon them!" That is how I do trust you have mainly spent your time—though in your letter you're too delicate to mention it. I was caught as in two or three firetraps—I mean places of great and special suffering, as during a week at the terrific Intervale, N.H., from July 1st to 8th or so (with the kind Merrimans, themselves Salamanders, who served me nothing but hot food and expected clothing ;)

but I found a blest refuge betimes with my kind old friend George James (widower of Lily Lodge,) at the tip end of the Nahant promontory, quite out at sea, where, amid gardens and groves and on a vast breezy verandah, my life was most mercifully saved and where I stuck fast till the very eve of my sailing. . . I got back *here*, myself, with a great sense that it was, quite desperately, high time; though, alas, I came upon the same brassy sky and red-hot air here as I left behind me—it has been as formidable a summer here as in the U.S. Everything is scorched and blighted—my garden a thing almost of cinders. There has been no rain for weeks and weeks, the thermometer is mostly at 90, and still it goes on. (90 in this thick English air is like 100 with us.) The like was never seen, and famine-threatening strikes (at London and Liverpool docks,) with wars and rumours of wars and the smash of the House of Lords and, as many people hold, of the constitution, complete the picture of a distracted and afflicted country. Nevertheless I shouldn't mind it so much if we could only have rain. *Then* I think all troubles would end, or mend—and at least I should begin to find myself again. I can't do so yet, and am waiting to see how and where I am.

I directed Notman, of Boston, to send you a photograph of a little old—ever so ancient—ambrotype lent me by Lilla Perry to have copied—her husband T. S. P. having been in obscure possession of it for half a century. It will at least show you where and how I was in about my 16th year. I strike myself as such a sweet little thing that I want you, and your mother, to see it in order to believe it—though she will believe it more easily than you. It looks even a great deal like *her* about that time too—we were always thought to look a little



alike. . . . My journey (voyage) out on the big smooth swift Mauretania gave me, and has left me with, such a sense as of a few hours' pampered *ferry*, making a mere mouthful of the waste of waters, that I kind of promise myself to come back "all the time." I had never been so blandly just lifted across. Tell your mother and Rosina and Leslie that I just cherish and adore them all. I cling to the memory of all those lovely motor-hours; tell Leslie in particular how dear I hold the remembrance of our run together to Stockbridge and Emily T.'s that wonderful long day. And I had the sweetest passages with great Rosina. But I fold you all together in my arms, with Grenville, please, well in the thick of it, and am, darling Bay, your most faithfully fond old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Howard Sturgis.*

Lamb House, Rye.

August 17th, 1911.

Beloved creature !

As if I hadn't mainly spent my time since my return here (a week ago yesterday) in writhing and squirming for very shame at having left your several, or at least your generously two or three last, exquisite outpourings unanswered. But I had long before sailing from là-bas, dearest Howard, and especially during the final throes and exhaustions, been utterly overturned by the savage heat and drought of a summer that had set in furiously the very last of May, going crescendo all that time—and of which I am finding here (so far as the sky of brass and the earth of cinders is concerned) so admirable an imitation. I have shown you often enough, I think, how much more I have in me of the

polar bear than of the salamander—and in fine, at the time I last heard from you, pen, ink and paper had dropped from my perspiring grasp (though while *in* the grasp they had never felt more adhesively sticky,) and I had become a mere prostrate, panting, liquefying mass, wailing to be removed. I *was* removed—at the date I mention—pressing your supreme benediction (in the form of eight sheets of lovely “stamped paper,” as they say in the U.S.) to my heaving bosom; but only to less sustaining and refreshing conditions than I had hoped for here. You will understand how some of these—in this seamed and cracked and blasted and distracted country—strike me; and perhaps even a little how I seem to myself to have been transferred simply from one sizzling grid-iron to another—at a time when my further toleration of grid-irons had reached its lowest ebb. *Such* a pile of waiting letters greeted me here—most of them pushing in with an indecency of clamour before *your* dear delicate signal. But it is always of you, dear and delicate and supremely interesting, that I have been thinking, and here is just a poor palpitating stopgap of a reply. Don't take it amiss of my wise affection if I tell you that I am heartily glad you are going to Scotland. Go, *go*, and stay as long as you ever can—it's the sort of thing exactly that will do you a world of good. I am to go there, I believe, next month, to stay four or five days with John Cadwalader—and eke with Minnie of that ilk (or more or less,) in Forfarshire—but that will probably be lateish in the month; and before I go you will have come back from the Eshers and I have returned from a visit of a few days which I expect to embark upon on Saturday next. Then, when we are gathered in, no power on earth will prevent me from throwing myself on your bosom.

Forgive meanwhile the vulgar sufficiency and banality of my advice, above, as to what will "do you good"—loathsome expression! But one grasps in one's haste the cheapest current coin. I commend myself strongly to the gentlest (no, that's not the word—say the firmest even while the fairest) of Williams, and am yours, dearest Howard, ever so yearningly,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I don't know of course in the least what Esher's "operation" may have been—but I hope not very grave and that he is coming round from it. I should like to be very kindly remembered to *her*—who shines to me, from far back, in so amiable a light. . . .

*To Mrs. William James.*

Hill, Theydon Mount, Epping.  
August 27th, 1911.

Dearest Alice,

I want to write you while I am here—and it helps me (thus putting pen to paper does) to conjure away the darkness of this black anniversary—just a little. I have been dreading this day—as I have been living through this week, as you and Peg will have done, and Bill not less, under the shadow of all the memories and pangs of a year ago—but there is a strange (strange enough!) kind of weak anodyne of association in doing so here, where thanks to your support and unspeakable charity, utterly and entirely, I got sufficiently better of my own than deadly visitation of misery to struggle with you on to Nauheim. I met here at first on coming down a week—nine days—ago (quite fleeing from the hot and blighted Rye) the assault of all that

miserable and yet in a way helpful vision—but have since been very glad I came, just as I am glad that you *were* here then—in spite of everything. . . . I am adding day to day here, as you see—partly because it helps to tide me over a bad—not *physically* bad—time, and partly because my admirable and more than ever wonderful hostess puts it so as a favour to her that I do, that I can only oblige her in memory of all her great goodness to us—when it *did* make such a difference—of May 1910. So I daresay I shall stay on for ten or twelve days more (I don't want to stir, for one thing, till we have had some relief by *water*. It has now rained in some places, but there has fallen as yet no drop here or hereabouts—and the earth is sickening to behold.) I have my old room—and I have paid a visit to yours—which is empty. . . . Mrs. Swynnerton is doing an historical picture for a decorative competition—the embellishment of the Chelsea Town Hall, I believe: Queen Elizabeth taking refuge (at Chelsea) under an oak during a thunder-storm, and she finds the great oak here and Mrs. Hunter, in a wonderful Tudor dress and headgear and red wig, to be admirably, though too beautifully, the Queen: with the big canvas set up, out of doors, by the tree, where her marvellous model still finds time, on top of everything, to *pose*, hooped and ruffled and decorated, and in a most trying queenly position. Mrs. S. is also doing—finishing—the portrait of me that she pushed on so last year.

. . . But goodbye, dearest Alice, dearest all. I hope your Mother is with you and that Harry has begun to take his holiday—bless him. I bless your Mother too and send her my affectionate love. Goodbye, dearest Alice. Your all faithful

HENRY.

*To Mrs. John L. Gardner.*

Hill, Theydon Mount, Epping.  
September 3rd, 1911.

Dearest Isabella Gardner,

Yes, it has been abominable, my silence since I last heard from you—so kindly and beautifully and touchingly—during those few last flurried and worried days before I left America. They were very difficult, they were very deadly days: I was ill with the heat and the tension and the trouble, and, amid all the things to be done for the wind-up of a year's stay, I allowed myself to defer the great pleasure of answering you, yet the general pain of taking leave of you, to some such supposedly calmer hour as this. . . . I fled away from my little south coast habitation a very few days after reaching it—by reason of the brassy sky, the shadeless glare and the baked and barren earth, and took refuge among these supposedly dense shades—yet where also all summer no drop of rain has fallen. There is less of a glare nevertheless, and more of the cooling motor-car, and a very vast and beautiful old William and Mary (and older) house of a very interesting and delightful character, which has lately come into possession of an admirable friend of mine, Mrs. Charles Hunter, who tells me that she happily knows you and that you were very kind and helpful to her during a short visit she made a few (or several) years ago to America. It is a splendid old house—and though, in the midst of Epping Forest, it is but at ninety minutes' motor-ride from London, it's as sequestered and woodlanded as if it were much deeper in the country. And there are innumerable other interesting old places about, and such old-world nooks and corners

and felicities as make one feel (in the thick of revolution) that anything that "happens"—happens disturbingly—to this wonderful little attaching old England, the ripest fruit of time, can only be a change for the worse. Even the North Shore and its rich wild beauty fades by comparison—even East Gloucester and Cecilia's clamorous little bower make a less exquisite harmony. Nevertheless I think tenderly even of that bustling desert now—such is the magic of fond association. George James's shelter of me in his seaward fastness during those else insufferable weeks was a mercy I can never forget, and my beautiful day with you from Lynn on and on, to the lovely climax above-mentioned, is a cherished treasure of memory. I water this last sweet withered flower in particular with tears of regret—that we mightn't have had more of them. I hope your month of August has gone gently and reasonably and that you have continued to be able to put it in by the sea. I found the salt breath of that element gave the only savour—or the main one—that my consciousness knew at those bad times; and if you cultivated it duly and cultivated sweet peace, into the bargain, as hard as ever you could, I'll engage that you're better now—and will continue so if you'll only really take your unassailable *stand* on sweet peace. You will find in the depth of your admirable nature more genius and vocation for it than you have ever let yourself find out—and I hereby give you my blessing on your now splendid exploitation of that hitherto least attended-to of your many gardens. Become rich in indifference—to almost everything but your fondly faithful old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

By "Her" is meant Mrs. Wharton's motor, always referred to by the chauffeur as "she."

Lamb House, Rye.

Sept. 27th, 1911.

Dearest Edith,

Alas it is not possible—it is not even for a moment thinkable. I returned, practically, but last night to my long-abandoned home, where every earthly consideration, and every desire of my heart, conspires now to fix me in some sort of recovered peace and stability; I cling to its very doorposts, for which I have yearned for long months, and the idea of going forth again on new and distant and expensive adventure fills me with—let me frankly say—absolute terror and dismay—the desire, the frantic impulse of scared childhood, to plunge my head under the bedclothes and burrow there, not to "let it (i.e. *Her!*) get me!" In fine I *want* as little to renew the junketings and squanderings of exile—*time*, priceless time-squanderings as they are for me now—as I want devoutly much to do something very different, to which I must begin immediately to address myself—and even if my desire were intense indeed there would be gross difficulties for me to overcome. But enough—don't let me pile up the agony of the ungracious—as any failure of response to a magnificent invitation can only be. Let me simply gape all admiringly, from a distance, at the splendour of your own spirit and general resources—or rather let me just simply stay my pen and hide my head (under the bedclothes before-mentioned.) My finest deepest sense of the general matter is that the whole economy of my future (in which I see myself

reviving again to certain things, very definite things, that I want to do) absolutely lays an interdict (to which I oh so fondly bow!) on my *ever* leaving these shores again. And I have no scruple of saying this to you—your beautiful genius being so for great globe-adventures and putting girdles round the earth. Mine is, incomparably, for brooding like the Hen, whom I differ from but by a syllable in designation; and see how little I personally lose by it, since your putting on girdles so quite inevitably involves your passing at a given moment where I can reach forth and grab you a little. Don't despise me for a spiritless worm, only *livrez-vous-y* yourself . . . with all pride and power, and unroll the rich record later to your so inevitably deprived (though so basely resigned) and always so faithfully fond old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wilfred Sheridan.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Oct. 2nd, 1911.

Dear incomparable Child!

What is one to do, how is your poor old battered and tattered ex-neighbour above all to demean himself in the glittering presence of such a letter? Yes, I *have*—through the force of dire accidents—treated you to the most confused and aching void that could pretend to pass for the mere ghost of conversability, and yet you shine upon me still with your own sole light—the absolute dazzle of which very naturally brings tears to my eyes. You are a monster—or almost!—of magnanimity, as well as beauty and ability and (above all, clearly) of felicity, and there is nothing for me, I quite recognise, but to collapse and grovel. Behold



me before you worm-like therefore—a pretty ponderous worm, but still capable of the quiver of sensibility and quite inoffensively transportable—whether by motor-car or train, or the local, frugal fly. There is an almost incredible kindness for me in your and Wilfred's being prepared literally to harbour and nourish, to exhibit on your bright scene, publicly and all incongruously, so aged and dingy a parasite; but a real big breezy happiness sometimes begets, I know, a regular wantonness of charity, a fond extravagance of altruism, and I surrender myself to the wild experiment with the very most pious hope that you won't repent of it. You shall not at any point, I promise you, if the effort on my part decently to grace the splendid situation can possibly stave it off. I will bravely come then on Friday 27th—arriving, in the afternoon, by any conveyance that you are so good as to instruct me to adopt. And even as the earthworm might aspire—occasion offering—to mate with the silkworm, I will gladly arrange with dear glossy Howard to present myself if possible in *his* company. I rejoice in your offering me that cherished company, there is a rare felicity in it: for Howard is the person in all the world who is kindest to me *next after you*. I shall rejoice to see Wilfred again, and be particularly delighted to see him as my host; our acquaintance began a long time ago, but seemed till now to have been blighted by adversity. This splendidly makes up—and all the good I thought of him is confirmed for me by his thinking so much good of you. It will thrill me likewise to see your bower of bliss—a *fester Burg* in a distracted world just now, and where I pray that good understandings shall ever hold their own. It mustn't be difficult to be happy with you and by you, dear Clare, and you will

see how I, for my permitted part, shall pull it off. I was lately very happy in Scotland—happy for *me*, and for Scotland!—and it must have been something to do with the fact that (I being in Forfarshire) you were, or were even about to be, though unknown to me, in the neighbouring county. This created an atmosphere—over and above the bonny Scotch; I kind of sniffed your great geniality—from afar; so you see the kind of good you can't help doing me. It's rapture to think that you'll do me yet more—at closer quarters, and I am yours, my dear Clare, all affectionately,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Alice Runnells.*

H. J.'s nephew William, his brother's second son, had just become engaged to Miss Runnells.

Lamb House, Rye.

Oct. 4th, 1911.

My very dear Niece,

I must tell you at once all the pleasure your beautiful and generous letter of the 23rd September has given me. It's a genuine joy to have from you so straight the delightful truth of the whole matter, and I can't thank you enough for talking to me with an exquisite young confidence and treating me as the fond and faithful and intensely participating old uncle that I want to be. It makes me feel—all you say—how right I've been to be glad, and how righter still I shall be to be myself confident. How shall I tell you in return what an interest I am going to take in you—and how I want you to multiply for me the occasions of showing it? You see I take the greatest and tenderest interest in Bill—and you and I feel then exactly together

about that. We shall do—always more or less together!—everything we can think of to help him and back him up, and we shall find nothing more interesting and more paying. I expect somehow or other to see a great deal of him—and of you; and count on you to bring him out to me on the very first pretext, and on him to bring you. He is splendidly serious and *entier*; it's a great thing to be as *entier* as that. And he has great ability, great possibilities, which will take, and so much reward, all the bringing out and wooing forth and caring and looking out for that we can give them—as faith and affection can do these things; though of a certainty they would go their own way in spite of us—the fine powers would—if, unluckily for us, they *didn't* appeal to us. I like to think of you working out your ideas—planning all those possibilities together—in the wondrous Chocorua October—where I hope you are staying to the end—and even if intensity at the studio naturally suffers for the time it has only fallen back a little to gather again for the spring. I mean in particular the intensity of which you were the subject and centre, and which must have at first been somewhat hampered by its own very excess. Bill's only danger is in his tendency to be intensely intense—which is a bit of a waste; if one *is* intense (and it's the only thing for an artist to be) one should be economically, that is carelessly and cynically so: in that way one limits the conditions and tangles of one's problem. But don't give Bill this for a specimen of the way you and I are going to pull him through: we shall do much better yet—only it's past, far past, midnight and the deep hush of the little old sleeping town suggests bed-time rather as the great question for the moment. I have come back to this admirable small corner with

great joy and profit—and oh, dear Alice, how earnestly you are awaited here at some not really distant hour by your affectionate old uncle,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Frederic Harrison.*

The “small fiction” sent to Mrs. Harrison was *The Outcry*.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

Oct. 19, 1911.

Dear Mrs. Harrison,

I am more touched than I can say by your gentle and generous acknowledgment of the poor little sign of contrition and apology (in the shape of a slight offered beguilement) that referred to my graceless silence after the receipt of a beautiful word of sympathy in a great sorrow months and months ago—I am ashamed to remind you of how many! You now heap coals of fire, as the phrase is, on my head—and I can scarcely bear it, for the pure crushing sense of your goodness. I was in truth, at the time of your other letter, deeply submerged—at once horribly bereft and very ill physically, but I was really almost as much touched by the kindness of which yours was a part as I was either. Only I was unable to do anything at the time in the way of recognition—at the time or for a long while afterwards; and when at last I did begin to emerge—after a very difficult year in America which came to an end only two months ago, my very indebtednesses were paralysing—my long silence required, to my sore sense, so much explanation. However, I *have* little by little explained—to some friends; though I think not to those I count as closest—for such, one feels, are the best comprehenders, without one’s having to tell too much.

I am in town, you see—not at Rye, having gone back there definitely, three weeks ago, to the questionable experiment of taking up my abode there for the season to come. The experiment broke down—I can no longer stand the solitude and confinement, the *immobilisation*, of that contracted corner in these shortening and darkening weeks and months. These things have the worst effect upon me—and I fled to London pavements, lamplights, shopfronts, taxi's—and friends; amid all of which I have recovered my equilibrium excellently, and shall do so still more. It means definitely for me no more winters at rueful Rye—only summers, though I hope plenty of *them*. I go down there, however, for bits, to keep my small household together—I can't yet, or till I arrange some frugal footing, bring it up here; and I shall be delighted to profit by one of those occasions to seek your hospitality in a neighbourly way for a couple of nights. I shall be eager for this, and will communicate with you as soon as the opportunity seems to glimmer. Please express to Frederic Harrison my hearty participation, by sympathy and sense, in all the fine things that are now so handsomely happening to him; he is a splendid example and incitement (*excitement* in fact) for those climbing the great hill—the hill of the long faith and the stout staff—just after him, and who see him so little spent and so erect against the sky at the top. We see you *with* him, dear Mrs. Harrison, making scarcely less brave a figure—at least to your very faithful old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I have it at heart to mention that my small fiction was written two years ago—in 1909.

*To Miss Theodora Bosanquet.*

On this appeal Miss Bosanquet, H. J.'s amanuensis, secured rooms for him in Lawrence Street, Chelsea.

105 Pall Mall, S.W.

October 27th, 1911.

Dear Miss Bosanquet,

Oh if you *could* only have the real right thing to miraculously propose to me, you and Miss Bradley, when I see you on Tuesday at 4.30! For you see, by this bolting in horror and loathing (but don't *repeat* those expressions!) from Rye for the winter, my situation suddenly becomes special and difficult; and largely through this, that having got back to work and to a very particular job, the need of expressing myself, of pushing it on, on the old Remingtonese terms, grows daily stronger within me. But I haven't a seat and temple for the Remington and its priestess—*can't* have here at this club, and on the other hand *can't* now organize a permanent or regular and continuous footing for the London winter, which means something unfurnished and taking (*wasting, now*) time and thought. I want a small, very cheap and very clean *furnished* flat or trio of rooms etc. (like the one we talked of under the King's Cross delusion—only better *and* with some, a very few, tables and chairs and fireplaces,) that I could hire for 2 or 3—3 or 4—months to drive ahead my job in—the Remington priestess and I converging and meeting there morning by morning—and it being preferably nearer to her than to me; though near tubes and things for both of us! I must keep on *this* place for food and bed etc.—I have it by the year—till I really *have* something else by the year—for winter purposes—to supersede it (Lamb House abides, for long summers.)

Your researches can have only been for the unfurnished—but look, *think, invent!* Two or three decent little tabled and chaired and lighted rooms would do. I catch a train till Monday, probably late. But on Tuesday!

Yours ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. William James.*

The book on which H. J. was now at work was *A Small Boy and Others*.

The Athenaeum, Pall Mall, S.W.

Nov. 13th, 1911.

Dearest Alice,

I must bless you on the spot for your dear letter of the 22nd—continued on the 31st. I clutch so at everything that concerns and emanates from you all that I kind of pine for the need of it all the while—or at any rate am immensely and positively bettered by every scrap of the dear old Library life that you can manage to waft over to me. . . . I find, naturally, that I can think of you all, and mingle with you so, ever so much more vividly than I could of old—through the effect of all those weeks and months of last year—which have had at any rate that happy result, that I have the constant image of your days and doings. You must think now very cheerfully and relievedly of mine—because distinctly, yes, dear brave old London is working my cure. The *conditions* here were what I needed all the while that I was so far away from them—I mean because they are of the kind materially best addressed to helping me to work my way back to an equilibrium. . . . I shall see how it works—from 10.30 to 1.30 each day—and let you hear more; but it represents the yearning effort

really to get, more surely and swiftly now, up to my neck into the book about William and the rest of us. I have written to Harry to ask him for certain of the young, youthful letters (copies of them) which I didn't bring away with me—on the other hand I have found some six or eight very precious ones mixed up with the mass of Father's that I have with me (thrust into Father's envelopes etc.) Of Father's, alas, very few are useable; they are so intensely domestic, private and personal.

*November 19th.* I find with horror, dearest Alice, that I have inadvertently left this all these days in my portfolio (interrupted where I broke off above,) under the impression that I had finished and posted it. This is dreadful, and I am afraid shows how the beneficent London, for all its beneficence, does interpose, invade and distract, giving one too many things to do and to bear in mind at once. What sickened me is that I have thus kept my letter over a whole wasted week—so far as being in touch with you all is concerned. On the other hand this lapse of time enables me blessedly to confirm, in the light of further experience, whatever of good and hopeful the beginning of the present states to you. . . .

In the third place a most valued letter from Harry has come, accompanying a packet of more of William's letters typed, for which I heartily thank him, and promising me some others yet. I am writing to him in a very few days, and will then tell him how I am entirely at one with him about the kind of use to be made by me of all these early things, the kind of setting they must have, the kind of encompassment that the book, as *my* book, my play of reminiscence and almost of brotherly autobiography, and filial autobiography not less, must enshrine them in. The



book I see and feel will be difficult and unprecedented and perilous—but if I bring it off it will be exquisite and unique; bring it off as I inwardly project it and oh so devoutly desire it. I greatly regret only, also, the almost complete absence of letters from Alice. She clearly destroyed after Father's death all the letters she had written to *them*—him and Mother—in absence, and this was natural enough. But it leaves a perfect blank—though there are on the other hand all my own intimate memories. Could you see—ask—if Fanny Morse has kept any? that is just possible. She wrote after all so little. I marvel that *I* have none—during the Cambridge years. But she was so ill that writing was rare for her—*very* rare. However, I must end this. I hope the Irving St. winter wears a friendly face for you. I think so gratefully and kindly now of the little chintzy parlour—blest refuge. I re-embrace dearest Peg and I do so want some demonstration of what Aleck is doing. It's a pang to hear from you that he "isn't so well physically." What does that sadly mean? I send him all my love and to your mother. Ever your

HENRY.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

Nov. 19th, 1911.

Dearest Edith,

There are scarce degrees of difference in my constant need of hearing from you, yet when that felicity comes it manages each time to seem pre-eminent and to have assuaged an exceptional hunger. The pleasure and relief, at any rate, three days since, were of the rarest quality—and it's always least discouraging (for

the exchange of sentiments) to know that your wings are for the moment folded and your field a bit delimited. I knew you were back in Paris, as an informer passing hereby on his way thence again to N.Y. had seen you dining at the Ritz en nombreuse compagnie, "looking awfully handsome and stunningly dressed." And Mary Hunter cesjours-ci had given me earlier and more exotic news of you, yet coloured with a great vividness of sympathy and admiration. . . . But I feel that it takes a hard assurance to speak to you of "arriving" anywhere—as that implies starting and continuing, and before your great heroic rushes and revolutions I can only gape and sigh and sink back. It requires an association of ease—with the whole heroic question (of the "up and doing" state)—which I don't possess, to presume to suggestionise on the subject of a new advent. Great will be the glory and joy, and the rushing to and fro, when the wide wings are able, marvellously, to show us symptoms of spreading again—and here I am (mainly here this winter) to thrill with the first announcement. London is better for me, during these months, than any other spot of earth, or of pavement; and even here I seem to find I can work—and n'ai pas maintenant d'autre idée. Apropos of which aid to life your remarks about my small latest-born are absolutely to the point. The little creature is absolutely of the irresistible sex of her most intelligent critic—for I don't pretend, like Lady Macbeth, to bring forth men-children only. You speak at your ease, chère Madame, of the interminable and formidable job of my producing à mon âge another Golden Bowl—the most arduous and thankless task I ever set myself. However, on all that il y aurait bien des choses à dire; and meanwhile, I blush to say, the Outcry is on its way to a fifth edition

(in these few weeks), whereas it has taken the poor old G.B. eight or nine years to get even into a third. And I should have to go back and live for two continuous years at Lamb House to write it (living on dried herbs and cold water—for “staying power”—meanwhile;) and that would be very bad for me, would probably indeed put an end to me altogether. My own sense is that I don't want, and oughtn't to try, to attack ever again anything longer (save for about 70 or 80 pages more) than the Outcry. That is *déjà assez difficile*—the “artistic economy” of that inferior little product being a much more calculated and ciphered, much more cunning and (to use your sweet expression) crafty one than that of five G.B.'s. The vague verbosity of the Oxus-flood (*beau nom!*) terrifies me—sates me; whereas the steel structure of the other form makes every *parcelle* a weighed and related value. Moreover nobody is really doing (or, *ce me semble*, as I look about, can do) Outcries, while all the world is doing G.B.'s—and *vous-même, chère Madame, tout le premier*: which gives you really the cat out of the bag! My vanity forbids me (instead of the more sweetly consecrating it) a form in which you run me so close. *Seulement alors je compterais bâtir a great many (a great many, entendez-vous?) Outcries—and on données autrement rich.* About this present one hangs the inferiority, the comparative triviality, of its primal origin. But pardon this flood of professional egotism. I have in any case got back to work—on something that now the more urgently occupies me as the time for me circumstantially to have done it would have been last winter, when I was insuperably unfit for it, and that is extremely special, experimental and as yet occult. I apply myself to my effort every morning at a little

repaire in the depths of Chelsea, a couple of little rooms that I have secured for quiet and concentration—to which our blest taxi whirls me from hence every morning at 10 o'clock, and where I meet my amanuensis (of the days of the composition of the G.B.) to whom I gueuler to the best of my power. In said repaire I propose to crouch and me blottir (in the English shade of the word, for so intensely revising an animal, as well) for many many weeks; so that I fear, dearest Edith, your idea of “whirling me away” will have to adapt itself to the sense worn by “away”—as it clearly so gracefully will! For there are senses in which that particle is for me just the most obnoxious little object in the language. Make your fond use of it at any rate by first coming away—away hither. . . .

Yours all and always,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. This was begun five days ago—and was raggedly and ruthlessly broken off—had to be—and I didn't mark the place this Sunday a.m. where I took it up again—on page 6th. But I put only today's date—as I didn't put the other day's at the time.

*To W. E. Norris.*

Lamb House, Rye.

January 5th, 1912.

My dear Norris,

I don't know whether to call this a belated or a premature thing; as “a New Year's offering” (and my hand is tremendously *in* for those just now, though it is also tremendously fatigued) it is a bit behind; whereas for an independent overture it follows perhaps indiscreetly

fast on the heels of my Christmas letter. However, as since this last I have had the promptest and most beautiful one from you—a miracle of the perfect “fist” as well as of the perfect ease and grace—I make bold to feel that I am not quite untimely, that you won’t find me so, and I offer you still all the compliments of the Season—sated and gorged as you must by this time be with them and vague thin sustenance as they at best afford. If I hadn’t already in the course of the several score of letters which had long weighed on me and which I really retired to this place on Dec. 30th to work off as much as anything else, run into the ground the image of the coming year as the grim, veiled, equivocal and sinister figure who holds us all in his dread hand and whom we must therefore grovel and abase ourselves at once on the threshold of, as to curry favour with him, I would give you the full benefit of it—but I leave it there as it is; though if you do wish to crawl beside me, here I am flat on my face. I am putting in a few more days here—in order to bore if possible *through* my huge heap of postal obligations, the accumulation of three or four years, and not very visibly reduced even by the heroic efforts of the last week. I have never in all my life written so many letters within the same space of time—and I really think that is in the full sense of the term documentary proof of my recovery of a *normal* senile strength. I go to-morrow over into Kent to spend Sunday with some friends near Maidstone (they have lately acquired and extraordinarily restored Allington Castle, which is down in a deep sequestered bottom, plants its huge feet in the Medway, actually overflowed, I believe, up to its middle). I come back here again (with acute lumbago, I quite expect,) and begin again—that is, write

300 more letters ; after which I relapse fondly, and I think very wisely, upon London. Now that I am not *obliged* to be in this place (by having so committed myself to it for better for worse as I had in the past) I find I quite like it—having enjoyed the deep peace and ease of it this last week ; but I have to go away to prove to myself the non-obligation to stay, and that takes some doing—which I shall have set about by the 15th. London was quite delicious during that brown still Xmastide—the four or five days after I wrote to you : the drop of life and of traffic was beyond anything of the sort I had ever seen in that frame. The gregariousness of movement of the population is an amazing phenomenon—they had vanished so in a bunch that the streets were an uncanny desert, with the difference from of old that the taxis and motors were more absent than the cabs and carriages and busses ever were, for at any given moment the horizon is, through this power of disappearance, void of them—whereas the old things *had*, through their slowness, to hang about. One *gets* a taxi, by the way, much faster than one ever got a handsome (lo, I have managed to forget how to *write* the extinct object!)—and yet one gets it from so much further away and from such an at first hopeless void. . . .

Very romantic and charming the arrival of your gallant George—from all across Europe—for his Xmas eve with you ; your account of it touches me and I find myself ranking you with the celebrated fair of history and fable for whom the swimmings of the Hellespont and the breakings of the lance were perpetrated. I congratulate you on such a George in these for the most part merely “awfully sorry” days, and him on a chance of which he must have been awfully glad. And àpropos of such felicities—

or rather of felicities pure and simple, and not quite such, I do heartily hope that you *will* go on to Spain with your niece in the spring—I'm convinced that you'll find it a charming adventure. I've myself utterly ceased to travel—I'm a limpet now, for the rest of my life, on the rock of Britain, but I intensely enjoy the travels of my friends.

My pen fails and my clock strikes and I am yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss M. Betham Edwards.*

Lamb House, Rye,  
Jan. 5th, 1912.

Dear Miss Betham Edwards,

I can now at last tell you the sad story of the book for Emily Morgan—which I am having put up to go to you with this; as well as explain a little my long silence. The very day, or the very second day, after last seeing you, a change suddenly took place, under great necessity, in my then current plans and arrangements; I departed under that stress for London, practically to spend the winter, and have come back but for a very small number of days—I return there next week. "But," you will say, "why didn't you send the promised volume for E. M. from *London* then? What matter to us where it came from so long as it came?" To which I reply: "Well, I had in this house a small row of books available for the purpose and among which I could choose—also which I came away, in my precipitation, too soon to catch up in flight. In London I should have to go and *buy* the thing, my own production—while I *have* two or three bran-new volumes, which will be an economy to a man utterly depleted

by the inordinate number of copies of *The Outcry* that he has given away and all but six of which he has had to pay for—his sanguinary (admire my restraint!) publisher allowing him but six.” “Why then couldn’t you write home and have one of the books in question sent you?—or have it sent to Hastings directly from your house?” “Because I am the happy possessor of a priceless parlourmaid who *loves* doing up books, and other parcels, and does them up beautifully, and if the volume comes to me here, to be inscribed, I shall then have to do it up myself, an act for which I have absolutely no skill and which I dread and loathe, and tumble it forth clumsily and insecurely! Besides I was vague as to which of my works I *did* have on the accessible shelf—I only knew I had some—and would have to look and consider and decide: which I have now punctually done. And the thing will be beautifully wrapped!” “That’s all very well; but why then didn’t you write and explain why it was that you were keeping us unserved and uninformed?” “Oh, because from the moment I go up to town I *plunge*—plunge into the great whirlpool of postal matter, social matter, and above all, this time, grey matter of *cerebration*—having got back to horrible arrears of work and being at best so *postally* submerged during these last weeks that every claim of that sort that could be temporarily dodged was a claim that found me shameless and heartless.” But you see the penalty of all is that I have to write all *this* now.

. . . I’m glad you like adverbs—I adore them; they are the only qualifications I really much respect, and I agree with the fine author of your quotations in saying—or in thinking—that the sense for them is *the* literary sense. None other is much worth speaking of. But I hope my volume



won't contain too many for Emily Morgan. Don't let her dream of "acknowledging" it. She can do so when we meet again. Perhaps you can even help her out with the book by reading, yourself, the *Beast in the Jungle*, say—or the *Birthplace*. May our generally so ambiguous 1912 be all easy figuring for *you*. Yours, dear Miss Betham Edwards, all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Wilfred Sheridan.*

Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Sheridan had asked him to be godfather to their eldest child.

105 Pall Mall, S.W.

Jan. 12th, 1912.

My dear Wilfred,

Beautiful and touching to me your conjoined appeal, with dear Clare's, but I beg you to see the matter in the clear and happy light when I say that I'm afraid it won't do and that the blest Babe must really be placed, on the threshold of life (there should be but *one* h there—don't teach her to *spell* by me!) under some more valid and more charming protection than that of my accumulated and before long so *concluding* years. She mustn't be taken, for her first happy holiday, to visit her late godfather's tomb—as would certainly be the case were I to lend myself to the fond anachronism her too rosy-visioned parents so flatteringly propose. You see, dear Wilfred, I speak from a wealth of wisdom and experience—life has made me rather exceptionally acquainted with the godpaternal function (so successful an impostor would I seem to have been,) and it was long since brought home to me that the character takes more wearing and its duties more performing than I feel I have ever been able to give it. I

have three godchildren living (for to some I have been fatal)—two daughters and a son; and my conscience tells me that I have long grossly neglected them. They write me—at considerable length sometimes, and I just remember that I have one of their last sweet appeals still unanswered. This, dear Clare and dear Wilfred, is purely veracious history—a dark chapter in my life. Let me not add another—let me show at last a decent compunction. Let me not offer up a helpless and unconscious little career on the altar of my incompetence. Frankly, the lovely child should find at her font a younger and braver and nimbler presence, one that shall go on with her longer and become accessible to her personal knowledge. You will feel this together on easier reflection—just as you will see how my plea goes hand in hand with my deep appreciation of your exquisite confidence.

You must indeed, Wilfred, have been through terrific tension—I gathered from Ethel Dilke's letter that Clare's crisis had been dire; such are not the hours when a man most feels the privilege and pride of fatherhood. But I rejoice greatly in the good conditions now, and already make out that the daughter is to be of prodigious power, beauty and stature. I feel for that matter that by the time Easter comes I should drop her straight into the ritual reservoir—with a scandalous splash. It will take more than me—! (though you may well say you don't *want* more—after so many words!) I embrace you all three and am devotedly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Walter V. R. Berry.*

H. J. never at any time received presents easily, and the difficulty seems to have reached a climax over one recently sent him by Mr. Berry. It may not be obvious that the gift in question was a leather dressing-case.

Lamb House, Rye.

February 8th, 1912.

Très-cher et très-grand ami !

How you must have wondered at my silence ! But it has been, alas, inevitable and now is but feebly and dimly broken. Just after you passed through London—or rather even *while* you were passing through it—I began to fall upon evil days again ; a deplorable bout of unwellness which, making me fit for nothing, gave me a sick struggle, first, in those awkward Pall Mall conditions, and then reduced me to scrambling back here as best I might, where I have been these several days but a poor ineffectual rag. I shall get better here if I can still further draw on my sadly depleted store of time and patience ; but meanwhile I am capable but of this weak and appealing grimace—so deeply discouraged am I to feel that there are still, and after I have travelled so far, such horrid little deep holes for me to tumble into. (This has been a deeper one than for many months, though I am, I believe, slowly scrambling out ; and blest to me has been the resource of crawling to cover here—for better aid and comfort.) . . . The case has really and largely been, however, all the while, dearest Walter, that of my having had to yield, just after your glittering passage in town, to that simply overwhelming *coup de massue* of your—well, of your you know what. It was *that* that knocked me down—when I was just trembling for a fall ; it was that that laid me flat.

*February 14th.* Well, dearest Walter, it laid me after all so flat that I broke down, a week ago, in the foregoing attempt to do you, and your ineffable procédé, some manner of faint justice; I wasn't then apt for any sort of right or worthy approach to you, and there was nothing for me but resignedly to intermit and *me recoucher*. You had done it with your own mailed fist—mailed in glittering gold, speciously glazed in polished, inconceivably and indescribably sublimated, leather, and I had rallied but too superficially from the stroke. It claimed its victim afresh, and I have lain the better part of a week just languidly heaving and groaning as a result *de vos œuvres*—and forced thereby quite to neglect and ignore all letters. I am a little more on my feet again, and if this continues shall presently be able to return to town (Saturday or Monday;) where, however, the monstrous object will again confront me. That is the grand fact of the situation—that is the tawny lion, portentous creature, in my path. I can't get past him, I can't get round him, and on the other hand he stands glaring at me, refusing to give way and practically blocking all my future. I can't live with him, you see; because I can't live *up* to him. His claims, his pretensions, his dimensions, his assumptions and consumptions, above all the manner in which he causes every surrounding object (on my poor premises or within my poor range) to tell a dingy or deplorable tale—all this makes him the very scourge of my life, the very blot on my scutcheon. He doesn't regild that rusty metal—he simply takes up an attitude of gorgeous swagger, straight in front of all the rust and the rubbish, which makes me look as if I had stolen *somebody else's* (re-garnished *blason*) and were trying to palm it off as my own.

Cher et bon Gaultier, I simply can't *afford* him, and that is the sorry homely truth. *He is out of the picture*—out of *mine*; and behold me condemned to live forever with that canvas turned to the wall. Do you know what that means?—to have to give up going about at all, lest complications (of the most incalculable order) should ensue from its being seen what I go about *with*. Bonne renommée vaut mieux que sac-de-voyage doré, and though I may have had weaknesses that have brought me a little under public notice, my modest hold-all (which has accompanied me in most of my voyage through life) has at least, so far as I know, never *fait jaser*. All this I have to think of—and I put it candidly to you while yet there is time. That you shouldn't have counted the cost—to yourself—that is after all perhaps conceivable (quoiqu'à peine!) but that you shouldn't have counted the cost to *me*, to whom it spells ruin: *that* ranks you with those great lurid, though lovely, romantic and historic figures and charmers who have scattered their affections and lavished their favours only (as it has presently appeared) to consume and to destroy! More prosaically, dearest Walter (if one of the most lyric acts recorded in history—and one of the most finely aesthetic, and one stamped with the most matchless grace, *has* a prosaic side,) I have been truly overwhelmed by the princely munificence and generosity of your procédé, and I have gasped under it while tossing on the bed of indisposition. For a beau geste, c'est le plus beau, by all odds, of any in all my life ever esquissé in my direction, and it *has*, as such, left me really and truly panting helplessly after—or rather quite intensely *before*—it! What is a poor man to do, mon prince, mon bon prince, mon grand prince, when so prodigiously practised

upon? There is *nothing*, you see: for the proceeding itself swallows at a gulp, with its open crimson jaws (*such* a rosy mouth!) like Carlyle's Mirabeau, "all formulas." One doesn't "thank," I take it, when the heavens open—that is when the whale of Mr. Allen's-in-the-Strand celestial shopfront does—and discharge straight into one's lap the perfect compendium, the very burden of the song, of just what the Angels have been raving about ever since we first heard of them. Well *may* they have raved—but I can't, you see; I have to take the case (the incomparable suit-case) in abject silence and submission. Ah, Walter, Walter, why do you do these things? they're magnificent, but they're not—well, discussable or permissible or forgiveable. At least not all at once. It will take a long, long time. Only little by little and buckle-hole by buckle-hole, shall I be able to look, with you, even one strap in the face. As yet a sacred horror possesses me, and I must ask you to let me, please, though writing you at such length, not so much as mention the subject. It's better so. Perhaps your conscience will tell you why—tell you, I mean, that great supreme *gestes* are only fair when addressed to those who can themselves gesticulate. I can't—and it makes me feel so awkward and graceless and poor. I go about trying—so as to hurl it (something or other) back on you; but it doesn't come off—practice *doesn't* make perfect; you are victor, winner, master, oh irresistible one—you've done it, you've brought it off and got me down forever, and I must just feel your weight and bear your might to bless your name—even to the very end of the days of yours, dearest Walter, all too abjectly and too touchedly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To W. D. Howells.*

The following "open letter" was written to be read at the dinner held in New York in celebration of Mr. Howells's seventy-fifth birthday.

105 Pall Mall, S.W.

February 19th, 1912.

My dear Howells,

It is made known to me that they are soon to feast in New York the newest and freshest of the splendid birthdays to which you keep treating us, and that your many friends will meet round you to rejoice in it and reaffirm their allegiance. I shall not be there, to my sorrow, and though this is inevitable I yet want to be missed, peculiarly and monstrously missed; so that these words shall be a public apology for my absence: read by you, if you like and can stand it, but better still read *to* you and in fact straight *at* you, by whoever will be so kind and so loud and so distinct. For I doubt, you see, whether any of your toasters and acclaimers have anything like my ground and title for being with you at such an hour. There can scarce be one, I think, to-day, who has known you from so far back, who has kept so close to you for so long, and who has such fine old reasons—so old, yet so well preserved—to feel your virtue and sound your praise. My debt to you began well-nigh half a century ago, in the most personal way possible, and then kept growing and growing with your own admirable growth—but always rooted in the early intimate benefit. This benefit was that you held out your open editorial hand to me at the time I began to write—and I allude especially to the summer of 1866—with a frankness and sweetness of hospitality that was really the making of me, the making

of the confidence that required help and sympathy and that I should otherwise, I think, have strayed and stumbled about a long time without acquiring. You showed me the way and opened me the door; you wrote to me, and confessed yourself struck with me—I have never forgotten the beautiful thrill of *that*. You published me at once—and paid me, above all, with a dazzling promptitude; magnificently, I felt, and so that nothing since has ever quite come up to it. More than this even, you cheered me on with a sympathy that was in itself an inspiration. I mean that you talked to me and listened to me—ever so patiently and genially and suggestively conversed and consorted with me. This won me to you irresistibly and made you the most interesting person I knew—lost as I was in the charming sense that my best friend was an editor, and an almost insatiable editor, and that such a delicious being as that was a kind of property of my own. Yet how didn't that interest still quicken and spread when I became aware that—with such attention as you could spare from us, for I recognised my fellow-beneficiaries—you had started to cultivate *your* great garden as well; the tract of virgin soil that, beginning as a cluster of bright, fresh, sunny and savoury patches, close about the house, as it were, was to become that vast goodly pleasaunce of art and observation, of appreciation and creation, in which you have laboured, without a break or a lapse, to this day, and in which you have grown so grand a show of—well, really of everything. Your liberal visits to *my* plot, and your free-handed purchases there, were still greater events when I began to see you handle, yourself, with such ease the key to our rich and inexhaustible mystery. Then the question of what you would make of your own powers began to



be even more interesting than the question of what you would make of mine—all the more, I confess, as you had ended by settling this one so happily. My confidence in myself, which you had so helped me to, gave way to a fascinated impression of your own spread and growth; for you broke out so insistently and variously that it was a charm to watch and an excitement to follow you. The only drawback that I remember suffering from was that *I*, your original debtor, couldn't print or publish or pay you—which would have been a sort of ideal repayment and of enhanced credit; you could take care of yourself so beautifully, and I could (unless by some occasional happy chance or rare favour) scarce so much as glance at your proofs or have a glimpse of your "endings." I could only read you, full-blown and finished—and see, with the rest of the world, how you were doing it again and again.

That then was what I had with time to settle down to—the common attitude of seeing you do it again and again; keep on doing it, with your heroic consistency and your noble, genial abundance, during all the years that have seen so many apparitions come and go, so many vain flourishes attempted and achieved, so many little fortunes made and unmade, so many weaker inspirations betrayed and spent. Having myself to practise meaner economies, I have admired, from period to period, your so ample and liberal flow; wondered at your secret for doing positively a little—what do I say a little? I mean a magnificent deal!—of Everything. I seem to myself to have faltered and languished, to have missed more occasions than I have grasped, while you have piled up your monument just by remaining at your post. For you have had the advantage, after all, of breathing an air that has

suited and nourished you ; of sitting up to your neck, as I may say—or at least up to your waist—amid the sources of your inspiration. There and so you were at your post ; there and so the spell could ever work for you, there and so your relation to all your material grow closer and stronger, your perception penetrate, your authority accumulate. They make a great array, a literature in themselves, your studies of American life, so acute, so direct, so disinterested, so preoccupied but with the fine truth of the case ; and the more attaching to me, always, for their referring themselves to a time and an order when we knew together what American life *was*—or thought we did, deluded though we may have been ! I don't pretend to measure the effect, or to sound the depths, if they be not the shallows, of the huge wholesale importations and so-called assimilations of this later time ; I can only feel and speak for those conditions in which, as “ quiet observers,” as careful painters, as sincere artists, we could still, in our native, our human and social element, know more or less where we were and feel more or less what we had hold of. You knew and felt these things better than I ; you had learnt them earlier and more intimately, and it was impossible, I think, to be in more instinctive and more informed possession of the general truth of your subject than you happily found yourself. The *real* affair of the American case and character, as it met your view and brushed your sensibility, that was what inspired and attached you, and, heedless of foolish flurries from other quarters, of all wild or weak slashings of the air and wavings in the void, you gave yourself to it with an incorruptible faith. (You saw your field with a rare lucidity ; you saw all it had to give in the way of the romance of the real and the interest and the thrill and the

charm of the common, as one may put it; the character and the comedy, the point, the pathos, the tragedy, the particular home-grown humanity under your eyes and your hand and with which the life all about you was closely interknitted. Your hand reached out to these things with a fondness that was in itself a literary gift, and played with them as the artist only and always can play: freely, quaintly, incalculably, with all the assurance of his fancy and his irony, and yet with that fine taste for the truth and the pity and the meaning of the matter which keeps the temper of observation both sharp and sweet. To observe, by such an instinct and by such reflection, is to find work to one's hand and a challenge in every bush; and as the familiar American scene thus bristled about you, so, year by year, your vision more and more justly responded and swarmed. You put forth *A Modern Instance*, and *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, and *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, and *The Landlord at Lion's Head*, and *The Kentons* (that perfectly classic illustration of your spirit and your form,) after having put forth in perhaps lighter-fingered prelude *A Foregone Conclusion*, and *The Undiscovered Country*, and *The Lady of the Aroostook*, and *The Minister's Charge*—to make of a long list too short a one; with the effect, again and again, of a feeling for the human relation, as the social climate of our country qualifies, intensifies, generally conditions and colours it, which, married in perfect felicity to the expression you found for its service, constituted the originality that we want to fasten upon you, as with silver nails, to-night. Stroke by stroke and book by book your work was to become, for this exquisite notation of our whole democratic light and shade and give and take, in the highest degree *documentary*; so that none

other, through all your fine long season, could approach it in value and amplitude. None, let me say too, was to approach it in essential distinction; for you had grown master, by insidious practices best known to yourself, of a method so easy and so natural, so marked with the personal element of your humour and the play, not less personal, of your sympathy, that the critic kept coming on its secret connection with the grace of letters much as Fenimore Cooper's Leather-stocking—so knowing to be able to do it!—comes, in the forest, on the subtle tracks of Indian braves. However, these things take us far, and what I wished mainly to put on record is my sense of that unfailing, testifying truth in you which will keep you from ever being neglected. The critical intelligence—if any such fitful and discredited light may still be conceived as within our sphere—has not at all begun to render you its tribute. The more inquiringly and perceivingly it shall still be projected upon the American life we used to know, the more it shall be moved by the analytic and historic spirit, the more indispensable, the more a vessel of light, will you be found. It's a great thing to have used one's genius and done one's work with such quiet and robust consistency that they fall by their own weight into that happy service. You may remember perhaps, and I like to recall, how the great and admirable Taine, in one of the fine excursions of his French curiosity, greeted you as a precious painter and a sovereign witness. But his appreciation, I want you to believe with me, will yet be carried much further, and then—though you may have argued yourself happy, in your generous way and with your incurable optimism, even while noting yourself not understood—your really beautiful time will come. Nothing so much as feeling that he may himself

perhaps help a little to bring it on can give pleasure to yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

The following refers to the third volume (covering the years 1838 to 1848) of Mme Vladimir Karénine's "George Sand, sa Vie et ses Œuvres," an article on which, written by H. J. for the *Quarterly Review*, appears in *Notes on Novelists*.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

March 13th, 1912.

Dearest Edith,

Just a word to thank you—so inadequately—for everything. Your letter of the 1st infinitely appeals to me, and the 3d vol. of the amazing Vladimir (amazing for *acharnement* over her subject) has rejoiced my heart the more that I had quite given up expecting it. The two first vols. had long ago deeply held me—but I had at last had to suppose them but a colossal fragment. Fortunately the whole thing proves less fragmentary *than* colossal, and our dear old George *ressort* more and more prodigious the nearer one gets to her. The passages you marked contribute indeed *most* to this ineffable effect—and the long letter to sweet Solange is surely one of the rarest fruits of the human intelligence, one of the great things of literature. And what a value it all gets from our memory of that wondrous day when we explored the very scene where they pigged so thrillingly together. What a crew, what *mœurs*, what habits, what conditions and relations every way—and what an altogether mighty and marvellous George!—not diminished by all the greasiness and smelliness in which she made herself (and so many other persons!) at home. Poor gentlemanly, crucified

Chop!—not naturally at home in grease—but having been originally *pulled* in—and floundering there at last to extinction! *Ce qui dépasse*, however—and it makes the last word about dear old G. really—is her overwhelming *glibness*, as exemplified, e.g., in her long letter to Gryzmala (or whatever his name,) the one to the first page or two of which your pencil-marks refer me, and in which she “posts” him, as they say at Stockbridge, as to all her *amours*. To have such a flow of remark on that subject, and everything connected with it, at her command helps somehow to make one feel that Providence laid up for the French such a store of remark, in advance and, as it were, should the worst befall, that their conduct and *mœurs*, coming *after*, had positively to justify and do honour to the whole collection of formulae, phrases and, as I say, *glibnesses*—so that as there were at any rate such things there for them to inevitably *say*, why not simply *do* all the things that would give them a *rapport* and a sense? The things *we*, poor disinherited race, do, we have to do so dimly and sceptically, without the sense of any such beautiful *cadres* awaiting us—and therefore poorly and going but half—or a tenth—of the way. It makes a difference when you have to invent your suggestions and glosses all after the fact: you do it so miserably compared with Providence—especially Providence aided by the French language: which by the way convinces me that Providence thinks and *really* expresses itself only in French, the language of gallantry. It will be a joy when we can next converse on these and cognate themes—I know of no such link of true interchange as a community of interest in dear old George.

I don't know what else to tell you—nor where this will find you. . . . I kind of pray that you

may have been able to make yourself a system of some sort—to have arrived at some *modus vivendi*. The impossible wears on us, but we wear a little here, I think, even on the coal-strike and the mass of its attendant misery; though they produce an effect and create an atmosphere unspeakably dismal and depressing; to which the window-smashing women add a darker shade. I am blackly bored when the latter are at large and at work; but somehow I am still *more* blackly bored when they are shut up in Holloway and we are deprived of them. . . .

Yours all and always, dearest Edith,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To H. G. Wells.*

This refers to a proposal (which did not take effect) that Mr. Wells should become a member of the lately formed Academic Committee of the Royal Society of Literature.

105 Pall Mall, S.W.  
March 25th, 1912.

My dear Wells,

Your letter is none the less interesting for being what, alas, I believed it might be; in spite of which interest—or in spite of which belief at least—here I am at it again! I know perfectly what you mean by your indifference to Academies and Associations, Bodies and Boards, on all this ground of ours; no one should know better, as it is precisely my own state of mind—really caring as I do for nothing in the world but lonely patient virtue, which doesn't seek that company. Nevertheless I fondly hoped that it might end for you as it did, under earnest invitation, for me—in your having said and felt all those things *and then joined*—for the general

amenity and civility and unimportance of the thing, giving it the benefit of the doubt—for the sake of the good-nature. You will say that you *had* no doubt and couldn't therefore act on any: but that germ, alas, was what my letter sought to implant—in addition to its not being a question of your acting, but simply of your *not* (that is of your not refusing, but simply lifting your oar and letting yourself float on the current of acclamation.) There would be no question of your being entangled or hampered, or even, I think, of your being bored; the common ground between all lovers and practitioners of our general form would be under your feet so *naturally* and not at all out of your way; and it wouldn't be you in the least who would have to take a step backward or aside, it would be *we* gravitating toward you, melting into your orbit as a mere more direct effect of the energy of your genius. Your plea of your being anarchic and seeing your work as such isn't in the least, believe me, a reason against; for (also believe me) you are essentially wrong about that! (No talent, no imagination, no application of art, as great as yours, is able not to make much less for anarchy than for a continuity and coherency much bigger than any disintegration. There's no representation, no picture (which is your form,) that isn't by its very nature preservation, association, and of a positive associational *appeal*—that is the very grammar of it; none that isn't thereby some sort of interesting or curious *order*: I utterly defy it in short not to make, all the anarchy in the world aiding, far more than it unmakes—just as I utterly defy the anarchic to express itself representationally, art aiding, talent aiding, the play of invention aiding, in short *you* aiding, without the grossest, the absurdest inconsistency.) So it is that you are *in* our circle



anyhow you can fix it, and with us always drawing more around (though always at a respectful and considerate distance,) fascinatedly to admire and watch—all to the greater glory of the English name, and the brave, as brave as possible English array; the latter brave even with the one American blotch upon it. Oh *patriotism*!—that mine, the mere paying guest in the house, should have its credit more at heart than its unnatural, its proud and perverse son! However, all this isn't to worry or to weary (I wish it *could*!) your ruthlessness; it's only to drop a sigh on my shattered dream that you might have come among us with as much freedom as grace. I prolong the sigh as I think how much you might have done for *our* freedom—and how little we could do against yours!

Don't answer or acknowledge this unless it may have miraculously moved you by some quarter of an inch. But then oh *do*!—though I must warn you that I shall in that case follow it up to the death!

Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Lady Bell.*

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

May 17th, 1912.

My dear Florence Bell,

A good friend of ours—in fact one of our very best—spoke to me here a few days ago of your having lately had (all unknown to me) a great tribulation of illness; but also told me, to my lively relief, that you are getting steadily well again and that (thankful at the worst for small mercies after such an ordeal) you are in some degree accessible to the beguilement and consolation of letters. I have only taken time to

wonder whether just such a mercy as *this* may not be even below the worst—but am letting the question rest on the basis of my feeling that you must *never*, and that you *will* never, dream of any “acknowledging” of so inevitable a little sign of sympathy. Such dreams, I too well know, only aggravate and hamper the upward struggle, don’t in the least lighten or quicken it. Take absolute example by me—who had a very dismal bad illness two and a half years ago (from out of the blackness of which I haven’t even now wholly emerged,) and who reflect with positive complacency on all my letters, the received ones, of that time, that still, and that largely always will, remain unanswered. I want you to be complacent too—though at this rate there won’t be much for you to be so *about*! I really hope you go on smoothly and serenely—and am glad now that I didn’t helplessly know you were so stricken. But I wish I had for you a few solid chunks of digestible (that is, mainly good) news—such as, given your constitutional charity, will melt in your mouth. (There are people for whom only the other sort is digestible.) But I somehow in these subdued days—I speak of my own very personal ones—don’t *make* news; I even rather dread breaking out into it, or having it break into me: it’s so much oftener—

*May 26th.* Hill Hall, Theydon Mount, Epping.

I began the above now many days ago, and it was dashed from my hand by a sudden flap of one of the thousand tentacles of the London day—broken off short by that aggressive gesture (if the flapping of a tentacle *is* a conceivable gesture;) and here I take it up again in another place and at the first moment of any sort of freedom and ease for it. As I read it over the interruption strikes me as a sort of blessing

in disguise, as I can't imagine what I meant to say in that last portentous sentence, now doubtless never to be finished, and not in the least deserving it—even if it can have been anything less than the platitude that the news one gets is much more usually bad than good, and that as the news one gives is scarce more, mostly, than the news one has got, so the indigent state, in that line, is more gracefully worn than the bloated. I must have meant something better than that. At any rate see how indigent I am—that with all the momentous things that ought to have happened to me to explain my sorry lapse (for so many days,) my chronicle would seem only of the smallest beer. Put it at least that with these humble items the texture of my life has bristled—even to the effect of a certain fever and flurry; but they are such matters as would make no figure among the great issues and processions of Rounton—as I believe that great order to proceed. The nearest approach to the showy is my having come down here yesterday for a couple of days—in order not to prevent my young American nephew and niece (just lately married, and to whom I have been lending my little house in the country) from the amusement of it; as, being invited, they yet wouldn't come without my dim protection—so that I have made, dimly protective, thus much of a dash into the world—where I find myself quite vividly resigned. It is the world of the wonderful and delightful Mrs. Charles Hunter, whom you may know (long my very kind friend;) and all swimming just now in a sea of music: John Sargent (as much a player as a painter,) Percy Grainger, Roger Quilter, Wilfred von Glehn, and others; round whose harmonious circle, however, I roam as in outer darkness, catching a vague glow through the veiled windows

of the temple, but on the whole only intelligent enough to feel and rue my stupidity—which is quite the wrong condition. It is a great curse not to be densely enough indifferent to enough impossible things! Most things are impossible to me; but I blush for it—can't brazen it out that they are no loss. Brazening it out is the secret of life—for the *peu doués*. But what need of that have *you*, lady of the full programme and the rich performance? What I do enter here (beyond the loving-kindness *de toute cette jeunesse*) is the fresh illustration of the beauty and amenity and ancientry of this wondrous old England, which at twenty miles or so from London surrounds this admirable and interesting and historic house with a green country as wide and free, and apparently as sequestered, and strikingly as rural—in the Constable way—as if it were on the other side of the island. But I leave it tomorrow to go back to town till (probably) about July 1st, before which I fondly hope you may be so firm on your feet as to be able to glide again over those beautiful parquets of 95. In that case I shall be so delighted to glide in upon you—assuming my balance preserved—at some hour gently appointed by yourself. Then I shall tell you more—if you can stand more after this—fourteen sprawling and vacuous pages. (Alas, I am but *too* aware there is nothing in them; nothing, that is, but the affectionate fidelity, with every blessing on your further complete healing, of) yours all constantly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. W. K. Clifford.*

On May 7, 1912, the Academic Committee of the Royal Society of Literature celebrated the centenary of the birth of Robert Browning. H. J. read a paper on "The Novel in *The Ring and the Book*," afterwards included in *Notes on Novelists*. In an appreciative notice of the occasion in the *Pall Mall Gazette* Mr. Filson Young described his voice as "old."

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

May 18th, 1912.

Dearest Lucy !

Your impulse to steep me, and hold me down under water, in the Fountain of Youth, with Charles Boyd muscularly to help you, is no less beautiful than the expression you have given it, by which I am more touched than I can tell you. I take it as one of your constant kindnesses—but I had, all the same, I fear, taken Filson Young's Invidious Epithet (in that little compliment) as inevitable, wholly, though I believe it was mainly applied to my *voice*. My voice *was* on that Centenary itself Centenarian—for reasons that couldn't be helped—for I really that day wasn't fit to speak. As for one's own sense of antiquity, my own, what is one to say?—it varies, goes and comes; at times isn't there at all and at others is quite sufficient, thank you! I cultivate not thinking about it—and yet in certain ways I like it, like the sense of having had a great deal of life. The young, on the whole, make me pretty sad—the old themselves don't. But the *pretension* to youth is a thing that makes me saddest and oldest of all; the *acceptance* of the fact that I am all the while growing older on the other hand decidedly rejuvenates me; I say "what then?" and the answer doesn't come, there doesn't seem to be any, and that quite sets me up. So I am young *enough*—and you are magnificent, simply: I

get from you the sense of an inexhaustible vital freshness, and your voice is the voice (so beautiful!) of your twentieth year. Your going to America was admirably young—an act of your twenty-fifth. Don't *be* younger than that; don't seem a year younger than you do seem; for in that case you will have quite withdrawn from my side. Keep up with me a *little*. I shall come to see you again at no distant day, but the coming week seems to have got itself pretty well encumbered, and on the 24th or 26th I go to Rye for four or five days. After that I expect to be in town quite to the end of June. I am reading the Green Book in bits—as it were—the only way in which I *can* read (or at least do read the contemporary novel—though I read so very few—almost none.) My only way of reading—apart from that—is to imagine myself *writing* the thing before me, treating the subject—and thereby often differing from the author and his—or *her*—way. I find G. W. very brisk and alive, but I *have* to take it in pieces, or liberal sips, and so have only reached the middle. (What I feel critically (and I can feel about anything of the sort but critically) is that you don't *squeeze* your material hard and tight enough, to press out of its ounces and inches what they will give. That material lies too loose in your hand—or your hand, otherwise expressed, doesn't tighten round it. That is the fault of all fictive writing now, it seems to me—that and the inordinate abuse of dialogue—though this but one effect of the not squeezing. It's a wrong, a disastrous and unscientific economy altogether.) I squeeze as I read you—but that, as I say, is rewriting! However, I will tell you more when I have eaten all the pieces. And I shall love and stick to you always—as your old, very old, *oldest* old

H. J.

*To Hugh Walpole.*

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

May 19th, 1912.

. . . Your letter greatly moves and regales me. Fully do I enter into your joy of sequestration, and your bliss of removal from this scene of heated turmoil and dusty despair—which, however, re-awaits you! Never mind; sink up to your neck into the brimming basin of nature and peace, and teach yourself—by which I mean let your grandmother teach you—that with each revolving year you will need and make more piously these precious sacrifices to Pan and the Muses. History eternally repeats itself, and I remember well how in the old London years (of *my* old London—*this* isn't that one) I used to clutch at these chances of obscure flight and at the possession, less frustrated, of my soul, my senses and my hours. So keep it up; I miss you, little as I see you even when here (for I *feel* you more than I see you;) but I surrender you at whatever cost to the beneficent powers. Therefore I rejoice in the getting on of your work—how splendidly copious your flow; and am much interested in what you tell me of your readings and your literary emotions. These latter indeed—or some of them, as you express them, I don't think I fully share. At least when you ask me if I don't feel Dostoieffsky's "mad jumble, that flings things down in a heap," nearer truth and beauty than the picking and composing that you instance in Stevenson, I reply with emphasis that I feel nothing of the sort, and that the older I grow and the more I *go* the more sacred to me do picking and composing become—though I naturally don't limit myself to Stevenson's *kind* of the same. (Don't

let any one persuade you—there are plenty of ignorant and fatuous duffers to try to do it—that strenuous selection and comparison are not the very essence of art, and that Form *is* [not] substance to that degree that there is absolutely no substance without it. Form alone *takes*, and holds and preserves, substance—saves it from the welter of helpless verbiage that we swim in as in a sea of tasteless tepid pudding, and that makes one ashamed of an art capable of such degradations. Tolstoi and D. are fluid puddings, though not tasteless, because the amount of their own minds and souls in solution in the broth gives it savour and flavour, thanks to the strong, rank quality of their genius and their experience. But there are all sorts of things to be said of them, and in particular that we see how great a vice is their lack of composition, their defiance of economy and architecture, directly they are emulated and imitated; *then*, as subjects of emulation, models, they quite give themselves away. There is nothing so deplorable as a work of art with a *leak* in its interest; and there is no such leak of interest as through commonness of form. Its opposite, the *found* (because the sought-for) form is the absolute citadel and tabernacle of interest. But what a lecture I am reading you—though a very imperfect one—which you have drawn upon yourself (as moreover it was quite right you should.) But no matter—I shall go for you again—as soon as I find you in a lone corner. . . .

Well, dearest Hugh, love me a little better (if you *can*) for this letter, for I am ever so fondly and faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.



*To Miss Rhoda Broughton.*

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

June 2nd, 1912.

My dear Rhoda,

Too many days have elapsed since I got your kind letter—but London days do leak away even for one who punily tries to embank and economise them—as I do; they fall, as it were, from—or, better still, they utterly dissolve *in*—my nerveless grasp. In that enfeebled clutch the pen itself tends to wobble and drop; and hence, in short, my appearance of languor over the inkstand. This is a dark moist Sunday a.m., and I sit alone in the great dim solemn library of this Club (Thackeray's Megatherium or whatever,) and say to myself that the conditions now at last *ought* to be auspicious—though indeed that merely tends to make me but brood inefficiently over the transformations of London as such scenes express them and as I have seen them go on growing. Now at last the place becomes an utter void, a desert peopled with ghosts, for all except three days (about) of the week—speaking from the social point of view. The old Victorian *social* Sunday is dust and ashes, and a holy stillness, a repudiating blankness, has possession—which however, after all, has its merits and its conveniences too. . . . Cadogan Gardens, meanwhile, know me no more—the region has turned to sadness, as if, with your absence, all the blinds were down, and I now have no such confident and cordial afternoon refuge left. Very promptly, next winter, the blinds must be up again, and I will keep the tryst. I have been talking of you this evening with dear W. E. Norris, who is paying one of his much interspaced visits to town and has dined with

me, amiably, without other attractions. (This letter, begun this a.m. and interrupted, I take up again toward midnight.) . . . .

Good-night, however, now—I must stagger (really from the force of too total an abstinence) to my never-unappreciated couch. (Norris dined on a bottle of soda-water and I on no drop of anything.) I pray you be bearing grandly up, and I live in the light of your noble fortitude. One is always the better for a great example, and I am always all-faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Henry James, junior.*

Lamb House, Rye.

July 16th, 1912.

Dearest Harry,

. . . I came down here from town but five days ago, and feel intensely, after so long an absence, the blest, the invaluable, little old refuge-quality of dear L. H. at this and kindred seasons. A tremendous wave of heat is sweeping over the land—passed on apparently from “your side”—and I left London a fiery furnace and the Reform Club a feather bed on top of one in the same. The visitation still goes on day after day, but, with immense mitigation, I can bear it here—where nothing could be more mitigating than my fortunate conditions.

. . . The “working expensively” meanwhile signifies for me simply the “literary and artistic,” the technical, side of the matter—the fact that in doing this book I am led, by the very process and action of my idiosyncrasy, on and on into more evocation and ramification of old images and connections, more intellectual and moral autobiography (though all closely and, as I feel it, exquisitely associated and involved,) than I

shall quite know what to do with—to do with, that is, in this book (I shall doubtless be able to use rejected or suppressed parts in some other way.) It's my more and more (or long since established) difficulty always, that I have to project and *do* a great deal in order to choose from that, after the fact, what is most designated and supremely urgent. That is a costly way of working, as regards time, material etc.—at least in the short run. In the long run, and “by and large,” it, I think, abundantly justifies itself. That is really all I meant to convey to you and to your mother through Bill—as a kind of precaution and forewarning—for your inevitable sense of my “slowness.” Of course too I have had pulls up and breaks, sometimes disheartening ones, through the recurrence of bad physical conditions—and am still liable, strictly speaking, to these. But the main thing to say about these, once for all, is that they tend steadily, and most helpfully, to diminish, both in intensity and in duration, and that I have really now reached the point at which the successful effort to work really helps me physically—to say nothing of course of (a thousand times) morally. It remains true that I do worry about the money-question—by nature and fate (since I was born worrying, though myself much more than others!)—and that this is largely the result of these last years of lapse of productive work while my expenses have gone more or less (while I was with you all in America less!) ruthlessly on. But of this it's also to be cheerily said that I have only to be successfully and continuously at work for a period of about ten days for it all to fall into the background altogether (all the worry,) and be replaced by the bravest confidence of calculation. So much for *that*! And now, for the moment—for this post at least, I must pull up. Well of

course do I understand that with your big new preoccupations and duties close at hand you mayn't dream of a move in this direction, and I should be horrified at seeming to exert the least pressure toward your even repining at it. More still than the delight of seeing you will be that of knowing that you are getting into close quarters with your new job. I repeat that you have no idea of the good this will do me!—as to which I sit between your Mother and Peg, clasping a hand of each, while we watch your every movement and gloat, ecstatically, over you. Oh, give my love so abundingly to them, and to your grandmother, on it all!

Yours, dearest Harry, more affectionately than ever,

H. J.

*To R. W. Chapman.*

Mrs. Brookenham is of course the mother of the young heroine of *The Awkward Age*.

Lamb House, Rye.

July 17th, 1912.

Dear Mr. Chapman,

I very earnestly beg you not to take as the measure of the pleasure given me by your letter the inordinate delay of this acknowledgment. That admirable communication, reaching me at the climax of the London June, found me in a great tangle of difficulties over the command of my time and general conduct of my correspondence and other obligations; so that after a vain invocation of a better promptness where you were concerned, I took heart from the fact that I was soon to be at peace down here, and that hence I should be able to address you at my ease. I have in fact been here but a few days, and my slight further delay has but risen

from the fact that I brought down with me so *many* letters to answer!—though none of them, let me say, begins to affect me with the beauty and interest of yours.

I am in truth greatly touched, deeply moved by it. What is one to say or do in presence of an expression so generous and so penetrating? I can only listen very hard, as it were, taking it all in with bowed head and clasped hands, not to say moist eyes even, and feel that—well, that the whole thing *has* been after all worth while then. But one is simply in the *hands* of such a reader and appreciator as you—one yields even assentingly, gratefully and irresponsibly to the current of your story and consistency of your case. I feel that I really don't know much—as to what your various particulars imply—save that you are delightful, are dazzling, and that you must be beautifully right as to any view that you take of anything. Let me say, for all, that if you think so, so it must be; for clearly you see and understand and discriminate—while one is at the end of time one's self so very vague about many things and only conscious of one's general virtuous intentions and considerably strenuous effort. What one has done has been conditioned and related and involved—so to say, fatalised—every element and effort jammed up against some other necessity or yawning over some consequent void—and with anything good in one's achievement or fine in one's faculty conscious all the while of having to *pay* by this and that and the other corresponding dereliction or weakness. You let me off, however, as handsomely as you draw me on, and I see you as absolutely right about everything and want only to square with yours *my* impression: that is to say any but that of my being “dim” in respect to some of the aspects, possibly, of Mrs.

Brookenham—which I don't think I am: I really think I could stand a stiff cross-examination on that lady. But this is a detail, and I can meet you only in a large and fond pre-submission on the various points you make. I greatly wish our contact at Oxford the other day had been less hampered and reduced—so that it was impossible, in the event, altogether, to get within hail of you at Oriel. But I have promised the kind President of Magdalen another visit, and then I shall insist on being free to come and see you if you will let me. I cherish your letter and our brief talk meanwhile as charmingly-coloured lights in the total of that shining occasion. What power to irradiate has Oxford at its best!—and as it was, the other week, so greatly at that best. I *think* the gruesome little errors of text you once so devotedly noted for me in some of my original volumes don't for the most part survive in the collective edition—but though a strenuous I am a constitutionally fallible proof-reader, and I am almost afraid to assure myself. However, I must more or less face it, and I am yours, dear Mr. Chapman, all gratefully and faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Hugh Walpole.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Aug. 14th, 1912.

. . . I rejoice that you wander to such good purpose—by which I mean nothing more exemplary than that you apparently live in the light of curiosity and cheer. I'm very glad for you that these gentle passions have the succulent scene of Munich to pasture in. I haven't been there for long years—was never there but once at all, but haven't forgotten how

genial and sympathetic I found it. Drink deep of every impression and have a lot to tell me when the prodigal returns. I love travellers' tales—especially when I love the traveller; therefore have plenty to thrill me and to confirm that passion withal. I travel no further than this, and never shall again; but it serves my lean purposes, or most of them, and I'm thankful to be able to do so much and to feel even these quiet and wholesome little facts about me. We're having in this rude clime a summer of particularly bad and brutal manners—so far the sweetness of the matter fails; but I get out in the lulls of the tempest (it does nothing but rain and rage,) and when I'm within, my mind still to me a kingdom is, however dismembered and shrunken. I haven't seen a creature to talk of *you* with—but I see on these terms very few creatures indeed; none worth speaking of, still less worth talking to. Clearly *you* move still in the human maze—but I like to think of you there; may it be long before you find the clue to the exit. You say nothing of any return to *these* platitudes, so I suppose you are to be still a good while on the war-path; but when you are ready to smoke the pipe of peace come and ask *me* for a light. It's good for you to have read Taine's English Lit.; he lacks saturation, lacks *waste* of acquaintance, but sees with a magnificent objectivity, reacts with an energy to match, expresses with a splendid amplitude, and has just the critical value, I think, of being so off, so *far* (given such an intellectual reach,) and judging and feeling in so different an air. It's charming to me to hear that *The Ambassadors* have again engaged and still beguile you; it *is* probably a very *packed* production, with a good deal of one thing within another; I remember sitting on it, when I wrote it, with

that intending weight and presence with which you probably often sit in these days on your trunk to make the lid close and *all* your trousers and boots go in. I remember putting in a good deal about Chad and Strether, or Strether and Chad, rather; and am not sure that I quite understand what in that connection you miss—I mean in the way of what *could* be there. The whole thing is of course, to intensity, a picture of relations—and among them is, though not on the first line, the relation of Strether to Chad. The relation of Chad to Strether is a limited and according to my method only implied and indicated thing, sufficiently there; but Strether's to Chad consists above all in a charmed and yearning and wondering sense, a dimly envious sense, of all Chad's young living and easily-taken *other* relations; other not only than the one to him, but than the one to Mme de Vionnet and whoever else; this very sense, and the sense of Chad, generally, is a part, a large part, of poor dear Strether's discipline, development, adventure and general history. All of it that is of my subject seems to me given—given by dramatic projection, as all the rest is given: how can you say I do anything so foul and abject as to "state"? You deserve that I should condemn you to read the book over once again! However, instead of this I only impose that you come down to me, on your return, for a couple of days—when we can talk better. I hold you to the heart of your truest old

H. J.



*To Edmund Gosse.*

With regard to the "dread effulgence of their Lordships" it will be remembered that Mr. Gosse was at this time Librarian of the House of Lords. The allusion at the end is to Mr. Gosse's article on Swinburne in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, further dealt with in the next letter.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

7th October, 1912.

My dear Gosse,

Forgive this cold-blooded machinery—for I have been of late a stricken man, and still am not on my legs; though judging it a bit urgent to briefly communicate with you on a small practical matter. I have had quite a Devil of a summer, a very bad and damnable July and August, through a renewal of an ailment that I had regarded as a good deal subdued, but that descended upon me in force just after I last saw you and then absolutely raged for many weeks. (I allude to a most deplorable tendency to chronic pectoral, or, more specifically, anginal, pain; which, however, I finally, about a month ago, got more or less the better of, in a considerably reassuring way.) I was but beginning to profit by this comparative reprieve when I was smitten with a violent attack of the atrocious affection known as "Shingles"—my impression of the nature of which had been vague and inconsiderate, but to the now grim shade of which I take off my hat in the very abjection of respect. It has been a very horrible visitation, but I am getting better; only I am still in bed and have to appeal to you in this graceless mechanical way. My appeal bears on a tiny and trivial circumstance, the fact that I have practically concluded an agreement for a Flat which I saw

and liked and seemed to find within my powers before leaving town (No. 21 Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, S.W.) and which I am looking to for a more convenient and secure basis of regularly wintering in London, for the possibly brief remainder of my days, than any I have for a long time had. I want, in response to a letter just received from the proprietors of the same, to floor that apparently rather benighted and stupid body, who are restless over the question of a "social reference" (in addition to my reference to my Bankers), by a regular knock-down production of the most eminent and exalted tie I can produce; whereby I have given them your distinguished name as that of a voucher for my respectability—as distinguished from my solvency; for which latter I don't hint that you shall, however dimly, engage! So I have it on my conscience, you see, to let you know of the liberty I have thus taken with you; this on the chance of their really applying to you (which some final saving sense of their being rather silly may indeed keep them from doing.) If they do, kindly, very kindly, abound in my sense to the extent of intimating to them that not to know me famed for my respectability is scarcely to be respectable themselves! That is all I am able to trouble you with now. I am as yet a poor thing, more even the doctor's than mine own; but shall come round presently and shall then be able to give you a better account of myself. There is no question of my getting into the Flat in question till some time in January; I don't get possession till Dec. 25th, but this preliminary has had to be settled. Don't be burdened to write; I know your cares are on the eve of beginning again, and how heavy they may presently be. I have only wanted to create for our ironic intelligence the harmless pleasure

of letting loose a little, in a roundabout way, upon the platitude of the City and West End Properties Limited, the dread effulgence of their Lordships; the latter being the light and you the transparent lantern that my shaky hand holds up. More, as I say, when that hand is less shaky. I hope all your intimate news is good, and am only waiting for the new vol. of the Dictionary with your Swinburne, which a word from Sidney Lee has assured me is of maximum value. All faithful greeting.

Yours always,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 10th, 1912.

My dear Gosse,

Your good letter of this morning helps to console and sustain. One really needs any lift one can get after this odious experience. I am emerging, but it is slow, and I feel much ravaged and bedimmed. Fortunately these days have an intrinsic beauty—of the rarest and charmingest here; and I try to fling myself on the breast of Nature (though I don't mean by that fling myself and my poor blisters and scars on the dew-sprinkled lawn) and forget, imperfectly, that precious hours and days tumble unrestrained into the large round, the deep dark, the ever open, hole of sacrifice. I am almost afraid my silly lessors of the Chelsea Flat *won't* apply to you for a character of me if they haven't done so by now; afraid because the idea of a backhander from you, reaching them straight, would so gratify my sense of harmless sport. It was only a question of a

word in case they *should* appeal; kindly don't dream of any such if they let the question rest (in spite indeed of their having intimated that they would thoroughly thresh it out.)

I received with pleasure the small Swinburne—of so chaste and charming a form; the perusal of which lubricated yesterday two or three rough hours. Your composition bristles with items and authenticities even as a tight little cushion with individual pins; and, I take it, is everything that such a contribution to such a cause should be but for the not quite ample enough (for my appetite) conclusive estimate or appraisal. I know how little, far too little, to my sense, that element has figured in those pages in general; but I should have liked to see you, in spite of this, formulate and resume a little more the creature's character and genius, the aspect and effect of his general performance. You will say I have a morbid hankering for what a Dictionary doesn't undertake, what a Sidney Lee perhaps even doesn't offer space for. I admit that I talk at my ease—so far as ease is in my line just now. Very charming and happy Lord Redesdale's contribution—showing, afresh, how *everything* about such a being as S. becomes and remains interesting. Prettily does Redesdale write—and prettily will — have winced; if indeed the pretty even in that form, or the wincing in any, could be conceived of him.

I have received within a day or two dear old George Meredith's Letters; and, though I haven't been able yet very much to go into them, I catch their emanation of something so admirable and, on the whole, so baffled and tragic. We must have more talk of them—and also of Wells' book, with which however I am having extreme difficulty. I am not so much struck with its hardness as with its weakness and looseness,

the utter going by the board of any real self-respect of composition and of expression. . . . What lacerates me perhaps most of all in the Meredith volumes is the meanness and poorness of editing—the absence of any attempt to project the Image (of character, temper, quantity and quality of mind, general size and sort of personality) that such a subject cries aloud for; to the shame of our purblind criticism. For such a Vividness to go a-begging!— . . . When one thinks of what Vividness would in France, in such a case, have leaped to its feet in commemorative and critical response! But there is too much to say, and I am able, in this minor key, to say too little. We must be at it again. I was afraid your wife was having another stretch of the dark valley to tread—I had heard of your brother-in-law's illness. May peace somehow come! I re-greet and regret you all, and am all faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 11th, 1912.

My dear Gosse,

Let me thank you again, on this lame basis though I still be, for the charming form of your news of your having helped me with my fastidious friends of the Flat. Clearly, they were to be hurled to their doom; for the proof of your having, with your potent finger, pressed the merciless spring, arrives this morning in the form of a quite obsequious request that I will conclude our transaction by a signature. This I am doing, and I am meanwhile lost in fond

consideration of the so susceptible spot (susceptible to profanation) that I shall have reached only after such purgations. I thank you most kindly for settling the matter.

Very interesting your note—in the matter of George Meredith. Yes, I spent much of yesterday reading the Letters, and quite agree with your judgment of them on the score of their rather marked non-illustration of his intellectual wealth. They make one, it seems to me, enormously *like* him—but that one had always done; and the series to Morley, and in a minor degree to Maxse, contain a certain number of rare and fine things, many beautiful felicities of wit and vision. But the whole aesthetic range, understanding that in a big sense, strikes me as meagre and short; he clearly lived even less than one had the sense of his doing in the world of art—in that whole divine preoccupation, that whole intimate restlessness of projection and perception. And this is the more striking that he appears to have been far more communicative and overflowing on the whole ground of what he was doing in prose or verse than I had at all supposed; to have lived and wrought with all those doors more open and publicly slamming and creaking on their hinges, as it were, than had consorted with one's sense, and with the whole legend, of his intellectual solitude. His whole case is full of anomalies, however, and these volumes illustrate it even by the light they throw on a certain poorness of range in most of his correspondents. Save for Morley (et encore!) most of them figure here as folk too little à la hauteur—! though, of course, a man, even of his distinction, can live and deal but with those who are within his radius. He was *starved*, to my vision, in many ways—and that makes him but the more nobly pathetic. In fine the

whole moral side of him throws out some splendidly clear lights—while the “artist,” the secondary Shakespeare, remains curiously dim. Your missing any letters to me rests on a misconception of my very limited, even though extremely delightful to me, active intercourse with him. I had with him no sense of reciprocity; he remained for me always a charming, a quite splendid and rather strange, Exhibition, so content itself to *be* one, all genially and glitteringly, but all exclusively, that I simply sat before him till the curtain fell, and then came again when I felt I should find it up. But I never *rang* it up, never felt any charge on me to challenge him by invitation or letter. But one or two notes from him did I find when Will Meredith wrote to me; and these, though perfectly charming and kind, I have preferred to keep unventilated. However, I am little enough observing that same discretion to *you*—! I slowly mend, but it’s absurd how far I feel I’ve to come back from. Sore and strained has the horrid business left me. But nevertheless I hope, and in fact almost propose.

Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

*The Morning Post* article was a review by Mr. Gosse of the *Letters of George Meredith*.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 13th, 1912.

My dear Gosse,

This is quite a feverish flurry of correspondence—but please don’t for a moment feel the present to entail on you the least further charge: I only want to protest against your

imputation of sarcasm to my figure of the pin-cushion and the pins—and this all genially: that image having represented to myself the highest possible tribute to your biographic *facture*. What I particularly meant was that probably no such tense satin slope had ever before grown, within the same number of square inches, so dense a little forest of discriminated upright stems! There you are, and I hear with immense satisfaction of the prospect of another crop yet—this time, I infer, on larger ground and with beautiful alleys and avenues and vistas piercing the plantation.

I rejoice alike to know of the M.P. article, on which I shall be able to put my hand here betimes tomorrow. I can't help wishing I had known of it a little before—I should have liked so to bring, in time, a few of my gleanings to your mill. But evidently we are quite under the same general impression, and your point about the dear man's confoundingness of allusion to the products of the French spirit is exactly what one had found oneself bewilderedly noting. There are two or three rather big felicities and sanities of judgment (in this order;) in one place a fine strong rightly-discriminated apprehension and characterisation of Victor Hugo. But for the rest such queer lapses and wanderings wild; with the striking fact, above all, that he scarcely once in the 2 volumes makes use of a French phrase or ventures on a French passage (as in sundry occasional notes of acknowledgment and other like flights,) without some marked inexpertness or *gaucherie*. Three or four of these things are even painful—they cause one uncomfortably to flush. And he appears to have gone to France, thanks to his second wife's connections there, putting in little visits and having contacts, of a scattered sort, much oftener than I supposed.



He "went abroad," for that matter, during certain years, a good deal more than I had fancied him able to—which is an observation I find, even now, of much comfort. But one's impression of his lack of what it's easiest to call, most comprehensively, aesthetic curiosity, is, I take it, exactly what you will have expressed your sense of. He speaks a couple of times of greatly admiring a novel of Daudet's, "Numa Roumestan," with the remark, twice over, that he has never "liked" any of the others; he only "likes" this one! The tone is of the oddest, coming from a man of the craft—even though the terms on which he himself was of the craft remain so peculiar—and such as there would be so much more to say about. To a fellow-novelist who could read Daudet at all (and I can't imagine his not, in such a relation, being read with curiosity, with critical appetite) "Numa" might very well appear to stand out from the others as the finest flower of the same method; but not to take it as one of them, or to take them as of its family and general complexion, is to reduce "liking" and not-liking to the sort of use that a spelling-out schoolgirl might make of them. Most of all (if I don't bore you) I think one particular observation counts—or has counted for me; the fact of the non-occurrence of one name, *the* one that aesthetic curiosity would have seemed scarce able, in any real overflow, to have kept entirely shy of; that of Balzac, I mean, which Meredith not only never once, even, stumbles against, but so much as seems to stray within possible view of. Of course one would never dream of measuring "play of mind," in such a case, by any man's positive mentions, few or many, of the said B.; yet when he *isn't* ever mentioned a certain desert effect comes from it (at least it does to thirsty me) and I

make all sorts of little reflections. But I am making too many now, and they are loose and casual, and you mustn't mind them for the present; all the more that I'm sorry to say I am still on shaky ground physically; this odious ailment not being, apparently, a thing that spends itself and clears off, but a beastly poison which hangs about, even after the most copious eruption and explosion, and suggests dismal relapses and returns to bed. I am really thinking of this latter form of relief even now—after having been up but for a couple of hours. However, don't "mind" me; even if I'm in for a real relapse *some* of the sting will, I trust, have been drawn.

Yours rather wearily,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I *am* having, it appears—Sunday, 2 p.m.—to tumble back into bed; though I rose but at 10!

*To Edmund Gosse.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 15th, 1912.

My dear Gosse,

Here I am at it again—for I can't not thank you for your two notes last night and this morning received. Your wife has all my tenderest sympathy in the matter of what the loss of her Brother cost her. Intimately will her feet have learnt to know these ways. So it goes on till we have no one left to lose—as I felt, with force, two summers ago, when I lost my two last Brothers within two months and became sole survivor of all my Father's house. I lay my hand very gently on our friend.

With your letter of last night came the Cornhill

with the beautifully done little Swinburne chapter. What a "grateful" subject, somehow, in every way, that gifted being—putting aside even, I mean, the value of his genius. He is grateful by one of those arbitrary values that dear G. M., for instance, doesn't positively command, in proportion to his intrinsic weight; and who can say quite why? Charming and vivid and authentic, at any rate, your picture of that occasion; to say nothing of your evocation, charged with so fine a Victorian melancholy, of Swinburne's time at Vichy with Leighton, Mrs. Sartoris and Richard Burton; what a felicitous and enviable image they do make together—and what prodigious discourse must even more particularly have ensued when S. and B. sat up late together after the others! Distinct to me the memory of a Sunday afternoon at Flaubert's in the winter of '75-'76, when Maupassant, still *inédit*, but always "round," regaled me with a fantastic tale, irreproducible here, of the relations between two Englishmen, each other, and their monkey! A picture the details of which have faded for me, but not the lurid impression. Most deliciously Victorian that too—I bend over it all so yearningly; and to the effect of my hoping "ever so" that you are in conscious possession of material for a series of just such other chapters in illustration of S., each a separate fine flower for a vivid even if loose nosegay.

I'm much interested by your echo of Haldane's remarks, or whatever, about G. M. Only the difficulty is, of a truth, somehow, that *ces messieurs*, he and Morley and Maxse and Stephen, and two or three others, Lady Ulrica included, really never knew much more where *they* were, on all the "aesthetic" ground, as one for convenience calls it, than the dear man himself

did, or where *he* was ; so that the whole history seems a record somehow (so far as "art and letters" are in question) of a certain absence of point on the part of every one concerned in it. Still, it abides with us, I think, that Meredith was an admirable spirit even if not an *entire* mind ; he throws out, to my sense, splendid great moral and ethical, what he himself would call "spiritual," lights, and has again and again big strong whiffs of manly tone and clear judgment. The fantastic and the mannered in him were as nothing, I think, to the intimately sane and straight ; just as the artist was nothing to the good citizen and the liberalised bourgeois. However, lead me not on ! I thank you ever so kindly for the authenticity of your word about these beastly recurrences (of my disorder.) I feel you floated in confidence on the deep tide of Philip's experience and wisdom. Still, I *am* trying to keep mainly out of bed again (after 48 hours just renewedly spent in it.) But on these terms you'll wish me back there—and I'm yours with no word more,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

Mr. Gosse had asked for further details with regard to Maupassant's tale, referred to in the previous letter. The legend in question was connected with Etretat and the odd figure of George E. J. Powell, Swinburne's host there during the summer of 1868, and more than once afterwards.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 17th, 1912.

My dear Gosse,

It's very well invoking a close to this raging fever of a correspondence when you have such arts for sending and keeping the temperature

up! I feel in the presence of your letter last night received that the little machine thrust under one's tongue may well now register or introduce the babble of a mind "affected"; though interestingly so, let me add, since it is indeed a thrill to think that I *am* perhaps the last living depositary of Maupassant's wonderful confidence or legend. I really believe myself the last survivor of those then surrounding Gustave Flaubert. I shrink a good deal at the same time, I confess, under the burden of an honour "unto which I was not born"; or, more exactly, hadn't been properly brought up or pre-admonished and pre-inspired to. I pull myself together, I invoke fond memory, as you urge upon me, and I feel the huge responsibility of my office and privilege; but at the same time I must remind you of certain inevitable weaknesses in my position, certain essential infirmities of my relation to the precious fact (meaning by the precious fact Maupassant's having, in that night of time and that general failure of inspiring prescience, so remarkably regaled me.) You will see in a moment everything that was wanting to make me the conscious recipient of a priceless treasure. You will see in fact how little I could have *any* of the right mental preparation. I didn't in the least know that M. himself was going to be so remarkable; I didn't in the least know that *I* was going to be; I didn't in the least know (and this was above all most frivolous of me) that *you* were going to be; I didn't even know that the monkey was going to be, or even realise the peculiar degree and *nuance* of the preserved lustre awaiting ces messieurs, the three taken together. Guy's story (he was only known as "Guy" then) dropped into my mind but as an unrelated thing, or rather as one related, and indeed with much intensity, to the peculiarly "rum," weird,

macabre and unimaginable light in which the interesting, or in other words the delirious, in English conduct and in English character, are—or were especially then—viewed in French circles sufficiently self-respecting to have views on the general matter at all, or in other words among the truly refined and enquiring. “Here they are at it!” I remember that as my main inward comment on Maupassant’s vivid little history; which was thus thereby somehow more vivid to me about *him*, than about either our friends or the Monkey; as to whom, as I say, I didn’t in the least foresee this present hour of arraignment!

At the same time I think I’m quite prepared to say, in fact absolutely, that of the two versions of the tale, the two quite distinct ones, to which you attribute a mystic and separate currency over there, Maupassant’s story to me was essentially Version No. I. It wasn’t at all the minor, the comparatively banal anecdote. Really what has remained with me is but the note of two elements—that of the Monkey’s jealousy, and that of the Monkey’s death; how brought about the latter I can’t at all at this time of day be sure, though I am haunted as with the vague impression that the poor beast figured as having somehow destroyed *himself*, committed suicide through the *spretæ injuria formæ*. The third person in the fantastic complication was either a young man employed as servant (within doors) or one employed as boatman, and in either case I think English; and some thin ghost of an impression abides with me that the “jealousy” was more on the Monkey’s part toward him than on his toward the Monkey; with which the circumstance that the Death I seem most (yet so dimly) to disembroil is simply and solely, or at least predominantly, that of the resentful and im-

passioned beast : who hovers about me as having seen the other fellow, the jeune anglais or whoever, installed on the scene after he was more or less lord of it, and so invade his province. You see how light and thin and confused are my data ! *How* I wish I had known or guessed enough in advance to be able to oblige you better now : not a stone then would I have left unturned, not an i would I have allowed to remain undotted ; no analysis or exhibition of the national character (of *either* of the national characters) so involved would I have failed to catch in the act. Yet I do so far serve you, it strikes me, as to be clear about *this*—that, whatever turn the dénouement took, whichever life was most luridly sacrificed (of those of the two humble dependants), the drama had essentially been one of the affections, the passions, the last *cocasserie*, with each member of the quartette involved ! Disentangle it as you can—I think Browning alone could really do so ! Does this at any rate—the best I can do for you—throw any sufficient light ? I recognise the importance, the historic bearing and value, of the most perfectly worked-out view of it. *Such* a pity, with this, that as I recover the fleeting moments from across the long years it is my then active figuration of the so tremendously *averti* young Guy's intellectual, critical, vital, experience of the subject-matter that hovers before me, rather than my comparatively detached curiosity as to the greater or less originality of ces messieurs !—even though, with this, highly original they would appear to have been. I seem moreover to mix up the occasion a little (I mean the occasion of that confidence) with another, still more dim, on which the so communicative Guy put it to me, à propos of I scarce remember what, that though he had

remained quite outside of the complexity I have been glancing at, some jeune anglais, in some other connection, had sought to draw him into some scarcely less fantastic or abnormal one, to the necessary determination on his part of some prompt and energetic action to the contrary: the details of which now escape me—it's all such a golden blur of old-time Flaubertism and Goncourtism! How many more strange flowers one *might* have gathered up and preserved! There was something from Goncourt one afternoon about certain Swans (they seem to run so to the stranger walks of the animal kingdom!) who figured in the background of some prodigious British existence, and of whom I seem to recollect there is some faint recall in "La Faustin" (not, by the way, "*Le Faustin*," as I think the printer has betrayed you into calling it in your recent Cornhill paper.) But the golden blur swallows up everything, everything but the slow-crawling, the too lagging, loitering amendment in my tiresome condition, out-distanced by the impatient and attached spirit of yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To H. G. Wells.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 18th, 1912.

My dear Wells,

I have been sadly silent since having to wire you (nearly three weeks ago) my poor plea of inability to embrace your so graceful offer of an occasion for my at last meeting, in accordance with my liveliest desire, the eminent Arnold Bennett; sadly in fact is a mild word for it, for I have cursed and raged, I have almost



irrecoverably suffered—with all of which the end is not yet. I had just been taken, when I answered your charming appeal, with a violent and vicious attack of “Shingles”—under which I have lain prostrate till this hour. I don’t shake it off—and perhaps you know how fell a thing it may be. I am precariously “up” and can do a little to beguile the black inconvenience of loss of time at a most awkward season by dealing after this graceless fashion with such arrears of smashed correspondence as I may so presume to patch up; but I mayn’t yet plan for the repair of other losses—I see no hope of my leaving home for many days, and haven’t yet been further out of this house than to creep feebly about my garden, where a blest season has most fortunately reigned. A couple of months hence I go up to town to stay (I have taken a lease of a small unfurnished flat in Chelsea, on the river;) and there for the ensuing five or six months I shall aim at inducing you to bring the kind Bennett, whom I meanwhile cordially and ruefully greet, to partake with me of some modest hospitality.

Meanwhile if I’ve been deprived of you on one plane I’ve been living with you very hard on another; you may not have forgotten that you kindly sent me “Marriage” (as you always so kindly render me that valued service;) which I’ve been able to give myself to at my less afflicted and ravaged hours. I have read you, as I always read you, and as I read no one else, with a complete abdication of all those “principles of criticism,” canons of form, preconceptions of felicity, references to the idea of method or the sacred laws of composition, which I roam, which I totter, through the pages of others attended in some dim degree by the fond yet feeble theory of, but which I shake off, as I advance under

your spell, with the most cynical inconsistency. For under your spell I do advance—save when I pull myself up stock still in order not to break it with so much as the breath of appreciation; I live with you and in you and (almost cannibal-like) *on* you, on you H. G. W., to the sacrifice of your Marjories and your Traffords, and whoever may be of their company; not your treatment of them, at all, but, much more, their befooling of you (pass me the merely scientific expression—I mean your fine high action in view of the red herring of lively interest they trail for you at their heels) becoming thus of the essence of the spectacle for me, and nothing in it all “happening” so much as these attestations of your character and behaviour, these reactions of yours as you more or less follow them, affect me as vividly happening. I see you “behave,” all along, much more than I see them even when they behave (as I’m not sure they behave *most* in “Marriage”) with whatever charged intensity or accomplished effect; so that the ground of the drama is somehow most of all the adventure for *you*—not to say *of* you—the moral, temperamental, personal, expressional, of your setting it forth; an adventure in fine more appreciable to me than any of those you are by way of letting *them* in for. I don’t say that those you let them in for don’t interest me too, and don’t “come off” and people the scene and lead on the attention, about as much as I can do with; but only, and always, that you beat them on their own ground and that your “story,” through the five hundred pages, says more to me than theirs. You’ll find this perhaps a queer rigmarole of a statement, but I ask you to allow for it just now as the mumble, at best, of an invalid; and wait a little till I can put more of my hand on my sense. Mind

you that the restriction I may seem to you to lay on my view of your work still leaves that work more convulsed with life and more brimming with blood than any it is given me nowadays to meet. The point I have wanted to make is that I find myself absolutely unable, and still more unwilling, to approach you, or to take leave of you, in any projected light of criticism, in any judging or concluding, any comparing, in fact in any aesthetic or "literary," relation at all; and this in spite of the fact that the light of criticism is almost that in which I most fondly bask and that the amusement I consequently renounce is one of the dearest of all to me. I simply decline—that's the way the thing works—to pass you again through my cerebral oven for critical consumption: I consume you crude and whole and to the last morsel, cannibalistically, quite, as I say; licking the platter clean of the last possibility of a savour and remaining thus yours abjectly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Humphry Ward.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 22nd, 1912.

Dear Mary Ward,

Having to acknowledge in this cold-blooded form so gracious a favour as your kind letter just received is so sorry a business as to tell at once a sad tale of the stricken state. I have been laid up these three weeks with an atrocious visitation of "Shingles," as the odious ailment is so vulgarly and inadequately called—the medical *herpes zonalis* meeting much better the malign intensity of the case—and the end is not yet. I am still most sore and sorry and can

but work off in this fashion a fraction of my correspondence. C'est assez vous dire that I can make no plan for any social adventure within any computable time. Forgive my taking this occasion to add further and with that final frankness that winds up "periods of life" and earthly stages, as it were, that I feel the chapter of social adventure now forever closed, and that I must go on for the rest of my days, such as that rest may be, only *tout doucement*, as utterly doucement as can possibly be managed. I am aged, infirm, hideously unsociable and utterly detached from any personal participation in the political game, to which I am naturally and from all circumstances so alien here, and which forms the constant carnival of all you splendid young people. Don't take this unamiable statement, please, for a profession of relaxed attachment to any bright individual, or least of all to any valued old friends; but just pardon my dropping it, as I pass, in the interest of the great pusillanimity that I find it important positively to cultivate—even at the risk of affecting you as solemn and pompous and ridiculous. I will admit to you (should you be so gently patient as to be moved in the least to contend with me) that this prolonged visitation of pain doesn't suggest to one views of future ease of any kind. I have none the less a view of coming up to town, for the rest of the winter, as soon as possible after Christmas; and I reserve the social adventure of tea in Grosvenor Place—effected with impunity—as the highest crown of my confidence. I shall trust you then to observe how exactly those charming conditions may seem suited to my powers. I'm delighted to know meanwhile that you have finished a gallant piece of work, which is more than I can say of myself after a whole summer

of stiff frustration ; for my current complaint is but the overflow of the bucket. Just see how your great goodnature has exposed you to that spatterment ! But I pull up—this is too lame a gait ; and am yours all not less faithfully than feebly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Humphry Ward.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 24th, 1912.

My dear Mary Ward,

I feel I *must* really thank you afresh, even by the freedom of this impersonal mechanism, for your renewed expression of kindness—very soothing and sustaining to me in my still rather dreary case. I am doing my utmost to get better, but the ailment has apparently endless secrets of its own for preventing that ; an infernal player with still another and another vicious card up his sleeve. This is precisely why your generous accents touch me—making me verily yearn as I think of the balm I should indeed find in talking with you of the latest products of those producers (few though they be) who lend themselves in a degree to remark. I have but within a day or two permitted myself a modicum of remark to H. G. Wells—who had sent me “Marriage” ; but I should really rather have addressed the quantity to you, on whom it’s not so important I should make my impression. I mean I should be in your case comparatively irrelevant—whereas in his I feel myself relevant only to be by the same stroke, as it were, but vain and ineffectual. Strange to me—in his affair—the coexistence of so much talent with so

little art, so much life with (so to speak) so little living! But of him there is much to say, for I really think him more interesting by his faults than he will probably ever manage to be in any other way; and he is a most vivid and violent object-lesson. But it's as if I were pretending to talk—which, for this beastly frustration, I am not. I envy you the quite ideal and transcendent jollity (as if Marie Corelli had herself evoked the image for us) of having polished off a brilliant *coup* and being on your way to celebrate the case in Paris. It's for me to-day as if people only did these things in Marie—and in Mary! Do while you are there re-enter, if convenient to you, into relation with Mrs. Wharton; if she be back, that is, from the last of her dazzling, her incessant, braveries of far excursionism. You may in that case be able to appease a little my always lively appetite for news of her. Don't, I beseech you, "acknowledge" in any manner this, with all you have else to do; not even to hurl back upon me (in refutation, reprobation or whatever) the charge I still persist in of your liking "politics" because of your all having, as splendid young people, the perpetual good time of being so intimately *in* them. They never cease to remind me personally, here (close corporation or intimate social club as they practically affect the aged and infirm, the lone and detached, the abjectly literary and unenrolled alien as being,) that one must sacrifice all sorts of blest freedoms and immunities, treasures of detachment and perception that make up for the "outsider" state, on any occasion of practical approach to circling round the camp; for penetration into which I haven't a single one of your pass-words—yours, I again mean, of the splendid young lot. But don't pity me, all the same, for this picture of my dim

exclusion; it is so compatible with more *other* initiations than I know, on the whole, almost what to do with. I hear the pass-words given—for it does happen that they sometimes reach my ear; and then, so far from representing for me the “salt of life,” as you handsomely put it, they seem to form for me the very measure of intellectual insipidity. All of which, however, is so much more than I meant to be led on to growl back at your perfect benevolence. Still, still, still—well, *still* I am harmoniously yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Gaillard T. Lapsley.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

October 24th, 1912.

My dear grand Gaillard,

I seem to do nothing just now but hurl back gruff refusals at gracious advances—and all in connection with the noble shades and the social scenes you particularly haunt. I wrote Howard S. last night that I couldn't, for weary dreary reasons, come to meet you at Qu'acre; and now I have just polished off (by this mechanical means, to which, for the time, I'm squalidly restricted) the illustrious Master of Magdalene, who, artfully and insidiously backed by your scarce less shining self, has invited me to exhibit my battered old person and blighted old wit on some luridly near day in those parts. I have had to refuse him, though using for the purpose the most grovelling language; and I have now to thank you, with the same morbid iridescence of form and the same invincible piggishness of spirit, for your share in the large appeal. Things are complicated with me to the last

degree, please believe, at present; and the highest literary flights I am capable of are these vain *gestes* from the dizzy edge of the couch of pain. I have been this whole month sharply ill—under an odious visitation of “Shingles”; and am not yet free or healed or able; not at all on my feet or at my ease. It has been a most dismal summer for me, for, after a most horrid and undermined July and August, I had begun in September to face about to work and hope, when this new plague of Egypt suddenly broke—to make confusion worse confounded. I am up to my neck in arrears, disabilities, and I should add despairs—were my resolution not to be beaten, however battered, not so adequate, apparently, to my constitutional presumption. Meanwhile, oh yes, I am of course as bruised and bored, as deprived and isolated, and even as indignant, as you like. But that I still *can* be indignant seems to kind of promise; perhaps it’s a symptom of dawning salvation. The great thing, at any rate, is for you to understand that I look forward to being fit within no *calculable* time either to prance in public or prattle in private, and that I grieve to have nothing better to tell you. Very charming and kind to me your own news from là-bas. I won’t attempt to do justice now to “all that side.” I sent Howard last night some express message to you—which kindly see that he delivers. We shall manage something, all the same, yet, and I am all faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.



*To John Bailey.*

The following refers to the offer, transmitted by Mr. Bailey, of the chairmanship of the English Association.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
November 11th, 1912.

My dear John,

Forgive (and while you are about it please commiserate) my having to take this round-about way of acknowledging your brave letter. I am stricken and helpless still—I can't sit up like a gentleman and drive the difficult pen. I am having an absolutely horrid and endless visitation—being now in the seventh week of the ordeal I had the other day to mention to you. It's a weary, dreary business, perpetual atrocious suffering, and you must pardon my replying to you as I can and not at all as I would. And I speak here, I have, alas, to say, not of my form of utterance only—for my matter (given that of your own charming appeal) would have in whatever conditions to be absolutely the same. Let me, for some poor comfort's sake, make the immediate rude jump to the one possible truth of my case: it is out of my power to meet your invitation with the least decency or grace. When one declines a beautiful honour, when one simply sits impenetrable to a generous and eloquent appeal, one had best have the horrid act over as soon as possible and not appear to beat about the bush and keep up the fond suspense. For me, frankly, my dear John, there is simply no question of these things: I am a mere stony, ugly monster of *Dissociation* and *Detachment*. I have never in all my life gone in for these other things, but have dodged and

shirked and successfully evaded them—to the best of my power at least, and so far as they have in fact assaulted me: all my instincts and the very essence of any poor thing that I might, or even still may, trump up for the occasion as my “genius” have been against them, and are more against them at this day than ever, though two or three of them (meaning by “them” the collective and congregated bodies, the splendid organisations, aforesaid) have successfully got their teeth, in spite of all I could do, into my bewildered and badgered antiquity. And this last, you see, is just one of the *reasons*—! for my not collapsing further, not exhibiting the last demoralisation, under the elegant pressure of which your charming plea is so all but dazzling a specimen. I can’t go into it all much in this sorry condition (a bad and dismal one still, for my ailment is not only, at the end of so many weeks, as “tedious” as you suppose, but quite fiendishly painful into the bargain)—but the rough sense of it is that I believe only in absolutely independent, individual and lonely virtue, and in the serenely unsociable (or if need be at a pinch sulky and sullen) practice of the same; the observation of a lifetime having convinced me that no fruit ripens but under that temporarily graceless rigour, and that the associational process for bringing it on is but a bright and hollow artifice, all vain and delusive. (I speak here of the Arts—or of my own poor attempt at one or two of them; the other matters must speak for themselves.) Let me even while I am about it heap up the measure of my grossness: the mere dim vision of presiding or what is called, I believe, taking the chair, at a speechifying public dinner, fills me, and has filled me all my life, with such aversion and horror that I have in the most odious manner consistently refused

for years to be present on such occasions even as a guest pre-assured of protection and effacement, and have not departed from my grim consistency even when cherished and excellent friends were being "offered" the banquet. I have at such times let them know in advance that I was utterly not to be counted on, and have indeed quite gloried in my shame; sitting at home the while and gloating over the fact that I wasn't present. In fine the revolution that my pretending to lend myself to your noble combination would propose to make in my life is unthinkable save as a convulsion that would simply end it. This then must serve as my answer to your kindest of letters—until at some easier hour I am able to make you a less brutal one. I know you would, or even will, wrestle with me, or at least feel as if you would like to; and I won't deny that to converse with you on any topic under the sun, and even in a connection in which I may appear at my worst, can never be anything but a delight to me. The idea of such a delight so solicits me, in fact, as I write, that if I were only somewhat less acutely laid up, and free to spend less of my time in bed and in anguish, I would say at once: Do come down to lunch and dine and sleep, so that I may have the pleasure of you in spite of my nasty attitude. As it is, please let me put it thus: that as soon as I get sufficiently better (if I ever do at this rate) to rise to the level of even so modest an hospitality as I am at best reduced to, I *will* appeal to you to come and partake of it, in your magnanimity, to that extent: not to show you that I am not utterly adamant, but that for private association, for the banquet of *two* and the fellowship of *that* fine scale, I have the best will in the world. We shall talk so much (and, I am convinced in spite of everything, so happily) that I won't say more

now—except that I venture all the same to commend myself brazenly to Mrs. John, and that I am yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Dr. J. William White.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

November 14th, 1912.

My dear William,

I am reduced for the present to this graceless machinery, but I would rather use it "on" you than let your vivid letter pass, under stress of my state, and so establish a sad precedent: since you know I *never* let your letters pass. I have been down these seven weeks with an atrocious and apparently absolutely endless attack of "Shingles"—herpes zonalis, you see I know!—of the abominable nature of which, at their worst, you will be aware from your professional experience, even if you are not, as I devoutly hope, by your personal. I have been having a simple hell (saving Letitia's presence) of a time; for at its worst (and a mysterious providence has held me worthy only of *that*) the pain and the perpetual distress are to the last degree excruciating and wearing. The end, moreover, is not yet: I go on and on—and feel as if I might for the rest of my life—or *would* honestly so feel were it not that I have some hope of light or relief from an eminent specialist . . . who has most kindly promised to come down from London and see me three days hence. My good "local practitioner" has quite thrown up the sponge—he can do nothing for me further and has welcomed a consultation with an alacrity that speaks volumes for his now at last quite voided state.

This is a dismal tale to regale you with—accustomed as even you are to dismal tales from me; but let it stand for attenuation of my [failure] to enter, with any lightness of step, upon the vast avenue of complacency over which you invite me to advance to some fonder contemplation of Mr. Roosevelt. I must simply state to you, my dear William, that I can't so much as *think* of Mr. Roosevelt for two consecutive moments: he has become to me, these last months, the mere monstrous embodiment of unprecedented resounding Noise; the steps he lately took toward that effect—of presenting himself as the noisiest figure, or agency of any kind, in the long, dire annals of the human race—having with me at least so consummately succeeded. I can but see him and hear him and feel him as raging sound and fury; and if ever a man was in a phase of his weary development, or stage of his persistent decline (as you will call it) or crisis of his afflicted nerves (which you will say I deserve), *not* to wish to roar with that Babel, or to be roared at *by* it, that worm-like creature is your irreconcilable friend. Let me say that I haven't yet read your Eulogy of the monster, as enclosed by you in the newspaper columns accompanying your letter—this being a bad, weak, oppressed and harassed moment for my doing so. You see the savagery of last summer, thundering upon our tympanums (pardon me, tympana) from over the sea, has left such scars, such a jangle of the auditive nerve (am I technically right?) as to make the least menace of another yell a thing of horror. I don't mean, dear William, that I suppose *you* yell—my auditive nerve cherishes in spite of everything the memory of your vocal sweetness; but your bristling protégé has but to peep at me from over your shoulder to make me clap my

hands to my ears and bury my head in the deepest hollow of that pile of pillows amid which I am now passing so much of my life. However, I must now fall back upon them—and I rejoice meanwhile in those lines of your good letter in which you give so handsome an account of your own soundness and (physical) saneness. I take this, fondly, too, for the picture of Letitia's "form"—knowing as I do with what inveterate devotion she ever forms herself *upon* you. I embrace you both, my dear William—so far as you consent to my abasing you (and abasing Letitia, which is graver) to the pillows aforesaid, and am ever affectionately yours and hers,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

Mr. Gosse's volume was his *Portraits and Sketches*, just published.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
November 19th, 1912.

My dear Gosse,

I received longer ago than I quite like to give you chapter and verse for your so-vividly interesting volume of literary Portraits; but you will have (or at least I earnestly beg you to have) no reproach for my long failure of acknowledgment when I tell you that my sorry state, under this dire physical visitation, has uninterruptedly continued, and that the end, or any kind of real break in a continuity of quite damnable pain, has still to be taken very much on trust. I am now in my 8th week of the horrible experience, which I have had to endure with remarkably little medical mitigation—really with none worth speaking of. Stricken and helpless, therefore,

I can do but little, to this communicative tune, on any one day; which has been also the more the case as my admirable Secretary was lately forced to be a whole fortnight absent—when I remained indeed without resource. I avail myself for this snatch of one of the first possible days, or rather hours, since her return. But I read your book, with lively “reactions,” within the first week of its arrival, and if I had then only had you more within range should have given you abundantly the benefit of my impressions, making you more genial observations than I shall perhaps now be able wholly to recover. I recover perfectly the great one at any rate—it is that each of the studies has extraordinary individual life, and that of Swinburne in particular, of course, more than any image that will ever be projected of him. This is a most interesting and charming paper, with never a drop or a slackness from beginning to end. I can’t help wishing you had proceeded a little further *critically*—that is, I mean, in the matter of appreciation of his essential stuff and substance, the proportions of his mixture, etc.; as I should have been tempted to say to you, for instance, “Go into that a bit *now!*” when you speak of the early setting-in of his arrest of development etc. But this may very well have been out of your frame—it might indeed have taken you far; and the space remains wonderfully filled-in, the figure all-convincing. Beautiful too the Bailey, the Horne and the Creighton—this last very rich and fine and touching. I envy you your having known so well so genial a creature as Creighton, with such largeness of endowment. You have done him very handsomely and tenderly; and poor little Shorthouse not to the last point of tenderness perhaps, but no doubt as handsomely, none the less, as was conceivably possible.

I won't deny to you that it was to your Andrew Lang I turned most immediately and with most suspense—and with most of an effect of drawing a long breath when it was over. It is very prettily and artfully brought off—but you would of course have invited me to feel with you how little you felt you were doing it as we should, so to speak, have “really liked.” Of course there were the difficulties, and of course you had to defer in a manner to some of them; but your paper is of value just in proportion as you more or less overrode them. His recent extinction, the facts of long acquaintance and camaraderie, let alone the wonder of several of his gifts and the mass of his achievement, couldn't, and still can't, in his case, not be complicating, clogging and qualifying circumstances; but what a pity, with them all, that a figure so lending itself to a certain amount of interesting *real* truth-telling, should, honestly speaking, enjoy such impunity, as regards some of its idiosyncrasies, should get off so scot-free (“Scot”-free is exactly the word!) on all the ground of its greatest hollowness, so much of its most “successful” puerility and perversity. Where I can't but feel that he *should* be brought to justice is in the matter of his whole “give-away” of the value of the wonderful chances he so continually enjoyed (enjoyed thanks to certain of his very gifts, I admit!)—give-away, I mean, by his *cultivation*, absolutely, of the puerile imagination and the fourth-rate opinion, the coming round to that of the old apple-woman at the corner as after all the good and the right as to any of the mysteries of mind or of art. His mixture of endowments and vacant holes, and “the making of the part” of each, would by themselves be matter for a really edifying critical study—for which, however, I quite recognise that the day



and the occasion have already hurried heedlessly away. And I perhaps throw a disproportionate weight on the whole question—merely by reason of a late accident or two; such as my having recently read his (in two or three respects so able) Joan of Arc, or Maid of France, and turned over his just-published (I think posthumous) compendium of “English Literature,” which lies on my table downstairs. The extraordinary inexpensiveness and childishness and impertinence of this latter gave to my sense the measure of a whole side of Lang, and yet which was one of the sides of his greatest flourishing. His extraordinary *voulu* Scotch provincialism crowns it and rounds it off; really making one at moments ask with what kind of an innermost intelligence such inanities and follies were compatible. The Joan of Arc is another matter, of course; but even there, with all the accomplishment, all the possession of detail, the sense of reality, the vision of the truths and processes of life, the light of experience and the finer sense of history, seem to me so wanting, that in spite of the thing’s being written so intensely *at* Anatole France, and in spite of some of A. F.’s own (and so different!) perversities, one “kind of” feels and believes Andrew again and again bristlingly yet *bêtement* wrong, and Anatole sinuously, yet oh so wisely, right!

However, all this has taken me absurdly far, and you’ll wonder why I should have broken away at such a tangent. You had given me the opportunity, but it’s over and I shall never speak again! I wish *you* would, all the same—since it may still somehow come your way. Your paper as it stands is a gage of possibilities. But good-bye—I can’t in this condition keep anything up; scarce even my confidence that Time, to which I have been clinging, is going,

after all, to help. I had from Saturday to Sunday afternoon last, it is true, the admirably kind and beneficent visit of a London friend who happens to be at the same time the great and all-knowing authority and expert on Herpes; he was so angelic as to come down and see me, for 24 hours, thoroughly overhaul me and leave me with the best assurance and with, what is more to the point, a remedy very probably more effective than any yet vouchsafed to me. . . . When I do at last emerge I shall escape from these confines and come up to town for the rest of the winter. But I shall have to feel differently first, and it may not be for some time yet. It in fact can't *possibly* be soon. You shall have then, at any rate, more news—"which," à la Mrs. Gamp, I hope your own has a better show to make.

Yours all, and all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I hope my last report on the little Etretat legend—it seems (not the legend but the report) of so long ago!—gave you something of the light you desired. And how I should have liked to hear about the Colvin dinner and its rich chiaroscuro. He has sent me his printed—charming, I think—speech: "the best thing he has done."

*To Mrs. Bigelow.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

November 21st, 1912.

My dear Edith,

It is interesting to hear from you on any ground—even when I am in the stricken state that this form of reply will suggest to you. . . .

For a couple of hours in the morning I can work off letters in this way—this way only; but let the rest be silence, till I scramble somehow or other, if I ever do, out of my hole. Pray for me hard meanwhile—you and Baby, and even the ingenuous Young Man; pray for me with every form and rite of sacrifice and burnt-offering.

As for the matter of your little request, it is of course easy, too easy, to comply with: why shouldn't you, for instance, just nip off my simple signature at the end of this and hand it to the artless suppliant? I call him by these bad names in spite of your gentle picture of him, for the simple reason that the time long ago, half a century ago, passed away when a request for one's autograph could affect one as anything but the cheapest and vaguest and emptiest "tribute" the futility of our common nature is capable of. I should like your young friend so much better, and believe so much more in his sentiments, if it exactly *hadn't* occurred to him to put forth the *banal* claim. My heart has been from far back, as I say, absolutely hard against it; and the rate at which it is (saving your presence) postally vomited forth is one of the least graceful features, one of the vulgarest and dustiest and poorest, of the great and glorious country beyond the sea. These ruthless words of mine will sufficiently explain to you why I indulge in no further flourish for our common admirer (for I'm *sure* you share him with me!) than my few and bare terminal pen-strokes here shall represent! Put him off with *them*—and even, if you like, read him my relentless words. Then if he winces, or weeps, or does anything nice and penitent and, above all, *intelligent*, press him to your bosom, pat him on the back (which you would so be in a position to do) and tell him to sin no more.

What is much more interesting are your vivid little words about yourself and the child. I shall put them by, with your address upon them, till, emerging from my long tunnel, as God grant I may, I come up to town to put in the rest of the winter. I have taken the lease, a longish one, of a little flat in Chelsea, Cheyne Walk, which must now give me again a better place of London hibernation than I have for a long time had. It had become necessary, for life-saving; and as soon as I shall have turned round in it you must come and have tea with me and bring Baby and even the Ingenuous One, if my wild words haven't or don't turn his tender passion to loathing. I shall really like much to see him—and even send him my love and blessing. Even if I have produced in him a vindictive reaction I will engage to take him in hand and so gently argue with him (on the horrid autograph habit) that he will perhaps renew his generous vows! I shall have nothing to show *you*, later on, so charming as the rhythmic Butcher's or the musical Pub; only a dull inhuman view of the River—which, however, adds almost as much to my rent as I gather that your advantages add to yours! Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I see the infatuated Youth is (on reading your note fondly over) not at your side (but “on the other side”) and therefore not amenable to your Bosom (worse luck for him)—so I scrawl him my sign independently of this. But the moral holds!

*To Robert C. Witt.*

It will be remembered that the story of *The Outcry* turns on the fortunes of a picture attributed to "Il Mantovano."

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

November 27th, 1912.

Dear Sir,

I am almost shocked to learn, through your appreciative note, that in imaginatively projecting, for use in "The Outcry," such a painter as the Mantovano, I unhappily coincided with an existing name, an artistic identity, a real one, with visible examples, in the annals of the art. I had never heard (in I am afraid my disgraceful ignorance) of the painter the two specimens of whom in the National Gallery you cite; and fondly flattered myself that I had simply excogitated, for its part in my drama, a name at once plausible, that is of good Italian type, and effective, as it were, for dramatic bandying-about. It was important, you see, that with the great claim that the story makes for my artist I should have a strictly supposititious one—with no awkward existing data to cast a possibly invidious or measurable light. So *my* Mantovano was a creature of mere (convincing) fancy—and this revelation of my not having been as inventive as I supposed rather puts me out! But I owe it to you none the less that I shall be able—after I have recovered from this humiliation—to go and have a look at our N.G. interloper. I thank you for this and am faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Mrs Wharton had sent him her recently published novel, *The Reef*.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

December 4th, 1912.

My dear E. W.

Your beautiful book has been my portion these several days, but as other matters, of a less ingratiating sort, have shared the fair harbourage, I fear I have left it a trifle bumped and *bousculé* in that at the best somewhat agitated basin. There it will gracefully ride the waves, however, long after every other temporarily floating object shall have sunk, as so much comparative "rot," beneath them. This is a rude figure for my sense of the entire interest and charm, the supreme validity and distinction, of *The Reef*. I am even yet, alas, in anything but a good way—so abominably does my ailment drag itself out; but it has been a real lift to read you and taste and ponder you; the experience has literally worked, at its hours, in a medicating sense that neither my local nor my London Doctor (present here in his greatness for a night and a day) shall have come within miles and miles of. Let me mention at once, and have done with it, that the advent and the effect of the intenser London light can only be described as an anticlimax, in fact as a tragic farce, of the first water: in short one of those *mauvais tours*, as far as results are concerned, that make one wonder how a Patient ever survives *any* relation with a Doctor. My Visitor was charming, intelligent, kind, all visibly a great master of the question; but he prescribed me a remedy, to begin its action directly

he had left, that simply and at a short notice sent me down into hell, where I lay sizzling (never such a sizzle before) for three days, and has since followed it up with another under the dire effect of which I languish even as I now write. . . . So much to express both what I owe you—or *have* owed you at moments that at all lent themselves—in the way of pervading balm, and to explain at the same time how scantily I am able for the hour to make my right acknowledgment.

There are fifty things I should like to say to you about the Book, and I shall have said most of them in the long run; but there are some that eagerly rise to my lips even now and for which I want the benefit of my "first flush" of appreciation. The whole of the finest part is, I think, quite the finest thing you have done; both *more* done than even the best of your other doing, and more worth it through intrinsic value, interest and beauty.

*December 9th.* I had to break off the other day, my dear Edith, through simple extremity of woe; and the woe has continued unbroken ever since—I have been in bed and in too great suffering, too unrelieved and too continual, for me to attempt any decent form of expression. I have just got up, for one of the first times, even now, and I sit in command of this poor little situation, ostensibly, instead of simply being bossed by it, though I don't at all know what it will bring. To attempt in this state to rise to any worthy reference to *The Reef* seems to me a vain thing; yet there remains with me so strongly the impression of its quality and of the unspeakably *fouillée* nature of the situation between the two principals (more gone into and with more undeviating truth than anything you have done) that I can't but babble of it a little to you even with these weak lips. It all shows,

partly, what strength of subject is, and how it carries and inspires, inasmuch as I think your subject in its essence [is] very fine and takes in no end of beautiful things to do. Each of these two figures is admirable for truth and *justesse*; the woman an exquisite thing, and with her characteristic finest, scarce differentiated notes (that is some of them) sounded with a wonder of delicacy. I'm not sure her oscillations are not beyond our notation; yet they are so held in your hand, so felt and known and shown, and everything seems so to come of itself. I suffer or worry a little from the fact that in the Prologue, as it were, we are admitted so much into the consciousness of the man, and that after the introduction of Anna (Anna so perfectly named) we see him almost only as she sees him—which gives our attention a different sort of work to do; yet this is really, I think, but a triumph of your method, for he remains of an absolute consistent verity, showing himself in that way better perhaps than in any other, and without a false note imputable, not a shadow of one, to his manner of so projecting himself. The beauty of it is that it is, for all it is worth, a Drama, and almost, as it seems to me, of the psychologic Racinian unity, intensity and gracility. Anna is really of Racine and one presently begins to feel her throughout as an Eriphyle or a Bérénice: which, by the way, helps to account a little for something *qui me chiffonne* throughout: which is why the whole thing, unrelated and unREFERRED save in the most superficial way to its *milieu* and background, and to any determining or qualifying *entourage*, takes place *comme cela*, and in a specified, localised way, in France—these non-French people “electing,” as it were, to have their story out there. This particularly makes all sorts of unanswered questions come up about Owen; and the notorious



wickedness of Paris isn't at all required to bring about the conditions of the Prologue. Oh, if you knew how plentifully we could supply them in London and, I should suppose, in New York or in Boston. But the point was, as I see it, that you couldn't really give us the sense of a Boston Eriphyle or Boston Givré, and that an exquisite instinct, "back of" your Racinian inspiration and settling the whole thing for you, whether consciously or not, absolutely prescribed a vague and elegant French colonnade or gallery, with a French river dimly gleaming through, as the harmonious *fond* you required. In the key of this, with all your reality, you have yet kept the whole thing: and, to deepen the harmony and accentuate the literary pitch, have never surpassed yourself for certain exquisite *moments*, certain images, analogies, metaphors, certain silver correspondences in your *façon de dire*; examples of which I could pluck out and numerically almost confound you with, were I not stammering this in so handicapped a way. There used to be little notes in you that were like fine benevolent finger-marks of the good George Eliot—the echo of much reading of that excellent woman, here and there, that is, sounding through. But now you are like a lost and recovered "ancient" whom *she* might have got a reading of (especially were he a Greek) and of whom in *her* texture some weaker reflection were to show. For, dearest Edith, you are stronger and firmer and finer than all of them put together; you go further and you say *mieux*, and your only drawback is not having the homeliness and the inevitability and the happy limitation and the affluent poverty, of a Country of your Own (*comme moi, par exemple!*) It makes you, this does, as you exquisitely say of somebody or something at some moment, elegiac

(what penetration, what delicacy in your use there of the term!)—makes you so, that is, for the Racinian-sérieux—but leaves you more in the desert (for everything else) that surrounds Apex City. But you will say that you're content with your lot; that the desert surrounding Apex City is quite enough of a dense crush for you, and that with the *colonnade* and the gallery and the dim river you will always otherwise pull through. To which I can only assent—after such an example of pulling through as The Reef. Clearly you have only to pull, and everything will come.

These are tepid and vain remarks, for truly I am helpless. I have had all these last days a perfect hell of an exasperation of my dire complaint, the 11th week of which begins to-day, and have arrived at the point really—the weariness of pain so great—of not knowing *à quel saint me vouer*. In this despair, and because “change” at any hazard and any cost is strongly urged upon me by both my Doctors, and is a part of the regular process of *dénouement* of my accursed ill, I am in all probability trying to scramble up to London by the end of this week, even if I have to tumble, howling, out of bed and go forth in my bedclothes. I shall go in this case to Garland's Hotel, Suffolk Street, where you have already seen me, and not to my Club, which is impossible in illness, nor to my little flat (21 Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, S.W.) which will not yet, or for another three or four weeks, be ready for me. The change to London may possibly do something toward breaking the spell: please pray hard that it shall. Forgive too my muddled accents and believe me, through the whole bad business, not the less faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To A. F. de Navarro.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

December 12th, 1912.

My dear delightful Tony,

Your missive, so vivid and genial, reaches me, alas, at a time of long eclipse and depression, during which my faculties have been blighted, my body tortured, and my resources generally exhausted. . . . I tell you these dismal things to explain in the first place why I am reduced to addressing you by this graceless machinery (I haven't written a letter with my own poor hand for long and helpless weeks;) and in the second place why I bring to bear on your gentle composition an intelligence still clouded and weakened. But I have read it with sympathy, and, I think I may say, most of all with envy; so haunted with pangs, while one tosses on the couch of pain—and mine has been, from the nature of my situation, a poor lone and un-surrounded pallet—all one's visionary and imaginative life; which one imputes, day by day, to happy people who frisk among fine old gardens and oscillate between Clubs of the Arts and Monuments of the Past. I am delighted that the Country Life people asked you for your paper, which I find ever so lightly and brightly done, with a touch as easy and practised as if you were the Darling of the Staff. That is in fact exactly what I hope your paper may make you—clearly you have the right sympathetic turn for those evocations, and I shall be glad to think of you as evoking again and again. I only wish you hadn't to deal this time with a house so amply modernised, in fact so renewed altogether, save for a false

front or two (or rather for a true one with false sides and backs), as I gather Abbotswood to be. The irrepressible Lutyens rages about us here, known at a glance by that modern note of the archaic which has become the most banal form of our cleverness. There is nothing left for *me* personally to like but the little mouldy nooks that Country Life is too proud to notice and everyone else (including the photographers) too rich to touch with their fingers of gold. I have too the inimitable old garden on my nerves; living here in a great garden county I have positively almost grown to hate flowers—so that only just now my poor contaminated little gardener is turning the biggest border I have (scarce bigger it is true than my large unshaven cheek) into a question, a begged question, of turf, so that we shall presently have “chucked” Flora altogether. Forgive, however, these morbid, *maussade* remarks; the blue devils of a long illness still interposing, in their insistent attitude, between my vision and your beauty—in which I include Mary’s, largely, and that of all the fine complexion of Broadway. I return your lucid sheets with this, but make out that, as you are to be in town only till Thursday p.m. (unless I am mistaken), they will reach you the sooner by my sending them straight home. My wish for their best luck go with them! I ought to mention that under extreme push of my Doctors (for I luxuriate in Two) I am seeking that final desperate remedy of a “change” which imposes itself at last in a long illness, to break into the vicious circle and dissipate the blight, by going up to town—almost straight out of bed and dangling my bedclothes about me. This will, I trust, smash the black spell. I have taken a small flat there . . . on what appears to be a lease that will long survive me, and there I earnestly beg you

to seek me as soon as may be after the new year. I am having first to crouch at an obscure hotel. I embrace you Both and am in much dilapidation but all fidelity yours always,

HENRY JAMES:

*To Henry James, junior.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

January 19th, 1913.

Dearest Harry,

I wrote, very copiously, and I hope not worryingly at all (for I only meant to be reassuring) to your Mother yesterday, from whom I had had two beautiful unacknowledged letters within the last days or so: unacknowledged save for a cable, of a cheerful stamp, which I sent off to Irving Street about a week ago, and which will have been sent on to you. But all the while your most blest letter, written during your Christmas moment at Cambridge, has been for me a thing to be so grateful for that I must express to you something of it to-day—even at the risk of a glut of information. My long silence—since I came up to town, including, I mean, my pretty dismal weeks at that “Garlant’s” of ill association—has had a great inevitability, from several causes; but into these I shall have gone to your Mother, whom I think I explicitly asked to send you on my letter, and I don’t want to waste force in repetitions. It won’t be repeating too much to say again what I said to her, even with extreme emphasis, that I feel singularly justified of this basis for my winter times in London; so much does it appear, now that the preliminary and just post-liminary strain of it is over, the very best thing I could have done for myself. My southward

position (as to the rooms I most use) immediately over the River is verily an "asset," and not even in the garden-room at L.H., of summer mornings, have I been better placed for work. With which, all the detail here is right and pleasant and workable; my servants extremely rejoice in it—but I *am* too much repeating! . . . Above all, my forenoons being by the mercy of the Powers, whoever or whatever they are, my best time, I have got back to work, and, with my uncanny interest in it and zeal for it still unimpaired, feel that it must "mean something" that I am thus reserved, after many troubles, for a productive relation with it. The proof-sheets of "A Small Boy and Others" have been coming in upon me rapidly—all but the very last; and it ought, by the end of next month at furthest, to burst upon the world. Of course I shall have advance copies sent promptly to you and to Irving Street; but, with this, I intensely want you to take into account that the Book was written through all these months of hampering and baffling illness. It went so haltingly and worriedly even last winter (as distinguished from anything I was able to do in the summer and could get at all during the last afflicted three or four months,) last winter having really been a much more difficult time than I could currently confess to, or than dear Bill and Alice probably got any sense of. The point is at any rate that the Book is now, under whatever disadvantages, wholly done, and that if it seems "good" in spite of these, the proof of my powers, when my powers have really worked off more of the heritage of woe of the last three years, will be but the more substantial. A very considerable lot of "Notes of a Son etc." is done, and I am now practically back at it with this appearance of a free little field in spite

of everything. . . . I welcome immensely (what I didn't mention to your Mother—waiting to do it thus) the valuable and delightful little collection received from you of your Grandfather's correspondence with Emerson. What beautiful and characteristic things in it and how I hope to be able to use the best of these, on your Grandfather's part at least. As regards Emerson's side of the matter I doubt whether I can do enough (in the way of extracts from him) to make it even necessary for me to apply to Edward for licence. I think I can hope but at the most to summarise, or give the sense of, some of Emerson's passages; the reason of this being my absolute presumable want of space. The Book will have to be a longer one than "A Small Boy," but even with this there must be limits involving suppressions and omissions. My own text I can't help attaching enough sense and importance and value to, not to want to keep that too utterly under, and I am more and more moved to give all of your Grandfather, on his vivid and original side, that I possibly can. Add to this all the application, of an illustrative kind, that I can't but see myself making of your Dad's letters, and I see little room for any one else's; though what I most deplore my meagre provision of is those of your Aunt Alice, written to our parents mainly during her times, and especially her final time, in Europe. The poverty of this resource cuts from under my feet almost all ground for doing much, as I had rather hoped in a manner to do, with her. . . .

*Jan. 23rd, 1913.* I have been unable to go on with this these several days, and yet also unwilling to let it go without saying a few more things I wanted—so the long letter I *have* got off to your Mother will precede it by longer than I meant. I still write, under my disabilities of damaged body, with difficulty (I mean perform

the act of writing,) but this is diminishing substantially though slowly—and I mainly mention it to extenuate these clumsy characters.

My conditions (of situation etc.) here meanwhile (this winter)—I mean these admirable and ample two rooms southward over the River, so still and yet so animated—are ideal for work. Some other time I will explain it to you—so far as you won't have noted it for yourself—how and why it is that I come to be so little beforehand financially. My fatally interrupted production of fiction began it, six years or more ago—and that began, so utterly against my preconception of such an effect, when I addressed myself to the so much longer and more arduous and more fatal-to-everything-else preparation of my "edition" than had been measurable in advance. That long period cut dreadfully into current gains—through complete arrest of other current labour; and when it was at last ended I had only time to do two small books (*The Finer Grain* and *The Outcry*) before the disaster of my long illness of Jan. 1910 descended upon me and laid a paralysis on everything. This hideous Herpetic episode and its developments have been of the absolute continuity of that, as they now make it (I hope), dire but departing Climax; and they have represented an interminable arrest of literary income (to speak of.) Now that I can look to apparently again getting back to decent continuity of work it becomes *vital* for me to aim at returning to the production of the Novel, my departure from which, with its heart-breaking loss of time, was a catastrophe, a perversity and fatality, so little dreamed of by me or intended. I yearn for it intellectually, and with all the force of my "genius" and imagination—artistically in short—and only when this relation is renewed shall I be again on a



normal basis. Only *how* I want to complete "Notes of a Son and Brother" with the last perfection first! Which is what I shall, I trust, during the next three or four months do, with far greater rapidity than I have done the first Book—for all last winter and spring my forenoon, my working hours, were my worst, and for long times so bad, and my later ones the better, whereas it is now the other way round.

*Jan. 28th.* I have had, alas, dearest Harry, to break this off and not take it up again—through blighted (bed-ridden) late afternoons and whole evenings—my only letter-writing time, unless I steal precious dictation-hours from Miss Bosanquet and the Book. . . . My vitality, my still sufficient cluster of vital "assets," to say nothing of my will to live and to write, assert themselves in spite of everything. This is 5.15 on a dismal wet afternoon; I have been out, but I came in again on purpose to get this off by tomorrow's, Wednesday's post. This apartment grows in grace—nothing really could have been better for me. I went into that long account, just above, of the reasons why through the frustration of fond Fiction I have (so much illness so aiding) sunk to this momentary *gêne*, I wanted to tell you, as against the appearance of too squalid a helplessness—for an early return to fond fiction will alter everything. . . . But what an endless sordid, illegible appeal! Take it, dearest Harry, in all indulgence, from your lately so much-tried and perhaps a little nervously over-anxious (by the effect of so much suffering,) but all unconquered and devoted old Uncle,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. A beautiful letter from your Mother of Jan. 13th (on receipt of my cable) has just come in. All tenderest love.

To Miss Grace Norton.

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
Feb. 6th, 1913.

Dearest old Friend !

Don't shudder, I beg you, at the sight of this grim legibility—even when you compare it with your own exquisite mastery of legibility without grimness! Let me down easily, in view of the long, the oh so much *too* long, ordeal that has pressed on me, and that has so hampered and hindered and harrowed me, that almost any sort of making shift to project my sentiments to a distance is a sort of victory won, or patch of ground wrested, from darkness and the devil! I am slowly slowly getting better of an interminable complicated siege of pain and distress; but it has left me with arrears of every sort piled up around me like the wild fragments of some convulsion of Nature, and I pick my way, or grope it, or even feebly and fatally fail of it, as I best can. There are things that help, withal, and one of these has been to receive your all-benignant little letter of two days ago. I needn't reaffirm to you at this time of day that all your long patiences and fidelities, all your generousities and gallantries of always rallying yet again, are always more beautiful to me than I ever seem to have managed *punctually* enough to help you, if need be, to feel—especially as of any such urgent "help" there need be no question now! You have had enough news of me from over your way, I infer, pretty dismal though it may have been, for me not to want fatuously to dose you with it (I mean given its bitter quality) further or at first hand; therefore let me rather

convey to you at first hand that I am getting into distinctly less pitiful case. . . . I have been too complicated a sufferer for it to clear at every point at the same time; but the general sense is ever so much better—and I am going to ask of your charity to let Alice, over the way, see these yearning pages, for her better reassurance—even if I have after a fashion managed, just of late, to reassure her more directly. I want her to have all the testimony I can treat her, and, by the same token, my dear Grace, treat *you* to.

Your little letter breathes all your characteristic courage and philosophy—while, I confess, at the same time, it fills out—or rather perhaps, more exactly, further removes the veil from—my in its very nature vivid enough picture of your fairly august state of lone Cambridge survivorship. I admired you on that state at closer quarters winter before last—even though my testimony to my so doing was at that time, from poor physical interferences, hampered and awkward; but History is so interesting when one is able to follow with closeness a particular attaching strain of it that my imagination, my intention, my affection and fidelity, hang and hover about your own particular noble exhibition of it as intelligently (yes, my dear Grace, as intelligently, nothing less, I insist) as you could possibly desire or put up with! Your letter fills in again for me a passage or two of detail—so that I feel myself the more possessed and qualified. . . . What I mean is above all that even this imperfect snatch of talk with you is dear and blest to me, and that if by hook or by crook, and through whatever densities of medium and distance, I draw out a little the sense of relation with you, it will have been better than utter frustration. I look out here, while I thus communicate, from a bit of the old-time

stretch of riverside Chelsea, my first far-away glimpse or sense of which has, like so many of my first London glimpses and senses (my very first of all, I mean,) a never-lost association with you and yours, or at least with yours and thereby with you: which means my having come here first of all, one day of the early spring of 1869, with Charles and Susan, they having in their kindness brought me to call with them on the great (*if* great!) and strange and more or less sinister D. G. Rossetti, whom Charles was in good relation with, difficult as that appeared already then to have become for most people, and my impression of whom on the occasion, with everything else of it, I have always closely retained. Part of it was just this impression of the really interesting and delightful old Thames-side Chelsea, over the admirable water-view of which these windows now hang—quite as if I had then secretly vowed to myself that some window of mine some day should. The River is more pompously embanked (making an admirable walk all the way to Westminster, of the most salutary value to me when I can at the soberest of paces attempt it;) but the sense of it all goes back, as I say, to my fond participation in that prehistoric Queen's Gate Terrace Winter. However, I am drenching you with numbered pages—I ask no credit for the number!—and I almost sit with you while you read them; not exactly watching for a glow of rapture on your face, but still, on the whole, seeing you take them, without a frown, for a good intention and a stopgap for something better. You tell me almost nothing of yourself, but all my sympathy and fidelity wait on you (sympathy always *can* come in somewhere!) and I am yours, my dear Grace, always all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Henry White.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
Feb. 23rd, 1913.

My dear old Friend,

Let this mechanic form and vulgar legibility notify you a little at the start that I am in rather a hampered and hindered state, and that that must plead both for my delay in acknowledging your dear faithful letter of the New Year time, and for my at last having to make the best of this too impersonal art. . . . I won't go into the history of my woes—all the more that I really hope I have shuffled the worst of them off. Even in this most recent form they have been part and parcel of the grave illness that overtook me as long ago as at the New Year, 1910, and with a very imperfect recovery from which I was struggling during those weary American months of winter-before-last when we planned so in vain that I should come to you in Washington. I have deeply regretted, ever since, my failure of that pleasure—all the more that I don't see it now as conceivably again within my reach. I am restored to this soil, for whatever may remain to me of my mortal career. The grand swing across the globe, which you and Harry will again nobly accomplish—again and yet again—now simply mocks at my weakness and my reduced resources. Besides, I am but too thankful to have a refuge in which *continuously* to crouch. Please fix well in your mind that continuity—as making it easy for you some day to find me here. The continuity is broken simply by my reverting to the country for the

summer and autumn—a mere change from the blue bed to the brown, and then from the brown back again to this Thames-side perch, which I call the blue. I hang here, for six months straight over the River and find it delightful and interesting, at once ever so quiet and ever so animated. The River has a quantity of picturesque and dramatic life and motion that one had never appreciated till one had thrown oneself on it *de confiance*. But it's another London, this old Chelsea of simplifications and sacrifices, from the world in which I so like to feel that I for so long lived more or less *with* you. I feel somehow as much away from that now as you and Harry must feel amid your new Washington horizons—and it has of itself, for that matter, gone to pieces under the sweep of the big broom of Time, which has scattered it without ceremony. A few vague and altered relics of it occasionally dangle for a moment before me. I was going to say “cross my path”—but I haven't now such a thing as a path, or it goes such a very few steps. I try meanwhile to project myself in imagination into your Washington existence—and, besides your own allusions to it, a passing visit a few days since from Walter Berry helped me a little to fix the shining vision. W. B. had been, I gathered, but a day or two near you, and wasn't in possession of many particulars. Beyond this, too, though you shine to me you shine a bit fearfully—for I can't rid myself (in a world of Chelsea limits and fashions) of a sense of the *formidable*, the somehow—at least for the likes of *me*!—difficult and bristling and glaring, side of the American conditions. However, you of course lightly ride the whirlwind—or at any rate have only as much or as little of the storms as you will, and can pick out of it only such musical thunder-rolls and most purely play-

ful forked lightnings as suit you best. What I mean is that here, after a fashion, a certain part of the work of discrimination and selection and primary clearing of the ground is already done for one, in a manner that enables one to begin, for one's self, further on or higher up; whereas over there I seemed to see myself, speaking only from my own experience, often beginning so "low down," just in that way of sifting and selecting, that all one's time went to it and one was spent before arriving at any very charming altitude. This you will find obscure, but study it well—though strictly in private, so as not to give me away as a sniffy critic. Heaven knows I indulge in the most remorseless habits of criticism *here*—even if I make no great public use of them, through the increasing privacy and antiquity of my life. I kind of wonder about the bearing of the queer Democratic régime that seems as yet so obscurely to loom upon any latent possibilities (that might have been) on Harry's and your "career"—just as I wonder what unutterable queerness may not, as a feature of the whole conundrum, "representatively" speaking, before long cause us all here to sit up and stare: one or two such startling rumours about the matter, I trust groundless, having already had something of that effect. But we must all wait, mustn't we? and I do indeed envy you both your so interesting opportunity for doing so, in a front box at the comedy, or tragedy, the fine old American show, that is, whatever turn it takes: it will all give you, these next months, so much to look at and talk about and expertly appreciate. Lord, how I wish I were in a state or situation to be dining with you to-night! I am dying, really, to see your House—which means alas that I shall die without doing so. No glimmer of a view of

the new Presidential family as a White House group has come my way—so that I sit in darkness there as all round, and feel you can but say that it serves me right not to have managed my life better—especially with your grand example! Amen, amen! . . .

I rejoice to hear of your having had your grandchildren with you, though you speak, bewilderingly, as if they had leaped across the globe in happy exemption from parents—or a parent. However, nothing does surprise me now—almost any kind of globe-leaping affects me, in my *trou*, as natural, possible, nay probable! I pat Harry ever so affectionately on the back, I hold you both in the most affectionate remembrance, and am yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. William James.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 5th, 1913.

Dearest Alice,

An extreme blessing to me is your dear letter from Montreal. I had lately much longed to hear from you—and when do I not?—and had sent you a message to that effect in writing to Harry a week ago. Really to have some of your facts and your current picture straight from yourself is better than anything else. . . .

I write you this in conditions that give me for the hour, this morning-hour, toward noon, such a sense of the possible beneficence of Climate, relenting ethereal mildness, so long and so far as one can at all come by it. We have been having, as I believe you have, a blessedly mild



winter, and the climax at this moment is a kind of all uncannily premature May-day of softness and beauty. I sit here with my big south window open to the River, open wide, and a sort of healing balm of sunshine flooding the place. Truly I feel I did well for myself in perching—even thus modestly for a “real home”—just on this spot. My beginnings of going out again have consisted, up to to-day, in four successive excursions in a Bath-chair—every command of which resource is installed but little more than round the corner from me; and the Bath-chair habit or vice is, I fear, only too capable now of marking me for its own. This of course not “really”—my excellent legs are, thank heaven, still too cherished a dependence and resource and remedy to me in the long run, or rather in the long (or even the short) crawl; only, if you’ve never tried it, the B.C. has a sweet appeal of its own, for contemplative ventilation; and I builded better than I knew when I happened to settle here, just where, in all London, the long, long, smooth and really charming and beguiling Thames-side Embankment offers it a quite ideal course for combined publicity (in the sense of variety) and tranquillity (in the sense of jostling against nobody and nothing and not having to pick one’s steps.) Add to this that just at hand, straight across the River, by the ample and also very quiet Albert Bridge, lies the large convenient and in its way also very beguiling Battersea Park: which you may but too unspeakably remember our making something of the circuit of with William on that day of the so troubled fortnight in London, after our return from Nauheim, when Theodate Pope called for us in her great car and we came first to just round the corner here, where he and I sat waiting together outside while you and she went into Carlyle’s

house. Every moment of that day has again and again pressed back upon me here—and how, rather suddenly, we had, in the park, where we went afterwards, to pull up, that is to turn and get back to the sinister little Symonds's as soon as possible. However, I don't know why I should stir that dismal memory. The way the "general location" seems propitious to me ought to succeed in soothing the nerves of association. This last I keep saying—I mean in the sense that, especially on such a morning as this, I quite adore this form of residence (this particular perch I mean) in order to make fully sure of what I have of soothing and reassuring to tell you. . . Lamb House hangs before me from this simplified standpoint here as a rather complicated haze; but I tend, I truly feel, to overdo that view of it—and shan't *settle* to any view at all for another year. It is the mere worriment of dragged-out unwellness that makes me see things in wrong dimensions. They right themselves perfectly at better periods. But I mustn't yet discourse too long: I am still under restriction as to uttering too much vocal sound; and I feel how guarding and nursing the vocal resource is beneficial and helpful. I don't speak to you of Harry—there would be too much to say and he must shine upon you even from N.Y. with so big a light of his own. I take him, and I take you all, to have been much moved by Woodrow Wilson's fine, and clearly so sincere, even if so partial and provisional address yesterday. It isn't *he*, but it is the so long and so deeply provincialised and diseducated and, I fear—in respect to individual activity and operative, that is administrative value—very below-the-mark "personalities" of the Democratic party, that one is pretty dismally anxious about. An administration that has to "take on" Bryan looks, from the overhere

point of view, like the queerest and crudest of all things! But of course I may not know what I'm talking about save when I thus embrace you all, almost principally Peg—and your Mother!—again and am your ever affectionate

HENRY JAMES.

*To Bruce Porter.*

The beginning and end of this letter are accidentally missing.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
[March, 1913.]

. . . a better one than for a long, long while; and it enables this poor scrawl thus to try to hang itself, for the hour, however awkwardly, round your neck. What was wonderful and beautiful in your letter of last November 9th (now so handsomely and liveably before me—I adore your hand) is that it was prompted, to the last perfection, by a sublime sense of what was just exactly my case at that hour, so that when I think of this, and of how I felt it when the letter came, and of how exquisite and interesting that essential fact made it (over and above its essential charm,) I don't know whether I am most amazed or ashamed at my not having as nearly as possible just then and there acclaimed the touching marvel. But in truth this very fact of the *justesse* of your globe-spanning divination is the real answer to that. You wrote because you so beautifully and suddenly *saw* from afar (and so admirably wanted to lay your hand on me in consequence:) saw, I mean, that I was in some acute trouble, and had the heavenly wish to signal to me your sympathetic sense of it. So, as I say, your admirable page itself tells

me, and so at the hour I hailed the sweet phenomenon. I had had a very bad summer, but hoped (and supposed) I was more or less throwing it off. But the points I make are, 1st, that your psychic sense of the situation had absolutely coincided in time, and in California, with what was going on at Lamb House, on the other side of the globe; and 2nd, after all, that precisely the condition so revealed to you was what made it too difficult for me to vibrate back to you with any proportionate punctuality or grace. Only *this*, you see, is my long-delayed and comparatively dull vibration. Here I am, at any rate, dearest Bruce, taking you as straight again to my aged heart as these poor clumsy methods will allow. Thank God meanwhile I have no supernatural fears about *you*! nor vain dreams that you are not in the living equilibrium, now as ever, that becomes you best, and of which you have the brave secret. I am incapable of doubting of this—though after all I now feel how exceedingly I should like you to tell me so even if but on one side of a sheet like this so handsome (I come back to that!) example that I have before me. You can do so much with one side of a sheet. But oh for a better approach to a real personal *jar*! It is indeed most strange, this intimate relation of ours that has been doomed to consist of a grain of contact (*et encore!*) to a ton of separation. It's to the honour of us anyhow that we *can* and do keep touching without the more platitudinous kind of demonstration of it. Still—demonstrate, as I say, for three minutes. Feel a little, to help you to it, how tenderly I lay my hands on you. This address will find me till the end of June—but Lamb House of course always. I have taken three or four (or five) years' lease of a small flat on this pleasant old Chelsea riverside to hibernate in

for the future. I return to the country for five or six months of summer and autumn, but can't stand the utter solitude and confinement of it from December to the spring's end. Ah, had we only a climate!—yours or Fanny Stevenson's (if she is still the exploiter of climates)—I believe I should be all right then! Tell me of her—and tell me of your Mother. I am sending you by the Scribners a volume of reminiscential twaddle. . . .

*To Lady Ritchie.*

Lady Ritchie had at this time thoughts (afterwards abandoned) of going to America. She was the "Princess Royal," of course, as the daughter of Thackeray.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 25th, 1913.

Dearest old Friend!

I am deeply interested and touched by your letter from the Island!—so much so that I shall indeed rush to you this (day-after-tomorrow) Thursday at 5.15. Your idea is (as regards your sainted Self!) of the bravest and most ingenious, but needing no end of things to be said about it—and I think I shall be able to say them *ALL*! The *furor* you would excite there, the glory in which you would swim (or sink!) would be of an ineffable resonance and effulgence; but I fear it would simply be a *fatal* Apotheosis, a prostrating exaltation. The devil of the thing (for yourself) would be that that terrific country is in every pulse of its being and on every inch of its surface a roaring repudiation and negation of anything like Privacy, and of the blinding and deafening Publicity you might come near to perish. *But* we will jaw

about it—there is so much to say—and for Hester it would be another matter: *she* could ride the whirlwind and enjoy, in a manner, the storm. Besides, *she* isn't the Princess Royal—but only *a remove* of the Blood! Again, however, *nous en causerons*—on Thursday. I shall so hug the chance. . . . I am impatient for it and am yours and the Child's all so faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. William James.*

The offering to Henry James from his friends in England on his seventieth birthday (April 15, 1913) took the form of a letter, a piece of plate (described in the following), and a request that he would sit for his portrait.

21 Carlyle Mansions,

Cheyne Walk, S.W.

April 1st, 1913.

Dearest Alice,

Today comes blessedly your letter of the 18th, written after the receipt of my cable to you in answer to your preceding one of the 6th (after you had heard from Robert Allerton of my illness.) You will have been reassured further—I mean beyond my cable—by a letter I lately despatched to Bill and Alice conjointly, in which I told them of my good and continued improvement. I am going on very well, increasingly so—in spite of my having to reckon with so much chronic pectoral pain, now so seated and settled, of the queer “falsely anginal” but none the less, when it is bad, distressing order. . . . Moreover too it is astonishing with how much pain one can with long practice learn constantly and not too defeatedly to live. Therefore, dearest Alice, don't think of this as too black a picture of my situation: it is so much brighter a one than I have thought at certain bad moments

and seasons of the past that I should probably ever be able to paint. The mere power to work in such measure as I can is an infinite help to a better consciousness—and though so impaired compared to what it used to be, it tends to grow, distinctly—which by itself proves that I have some firm ground under my feet. And I repeat to satiety that my conditions *here* are admirably helpful and favouring.

You can see, can't you? how strange and desperate it would be to "chuck" everything up, Lamb House, servants, Miss Bosanquet, *this* newly acquired and prized resource, to come over, by a formidable and expensive journey, to spend a summer in the (at best) to me torrid and (the inmost inside of 95 apart) utterly arid and vacuous Cambridge. Dearest Alice, I could come back to America (could be carried back on a stretcher) to die—but never, never to live. To say how the question affects me is dreadfully difficult because of its appearing so to make light of you and the children—but when I think of how little Boston and Cambridge were of old ever *my* affair, or anything but an accident, for me, of the parental life there to which I occasionally and painfully and losingly sacrificed, I have a superstitious terror of seeing them at the end of time again stretch out strange inevitable tentacles to draw me back and destroy me. And then I could never either make or afford the journey (I have no margin at all for *that* degree of effort.) But you will have understood too well—without my saying more—how little I can dream of any *déplacement* now—especially for the sake of a milieu in which you and Peg and Bill and Alice and Aleck would be burdened with the charge of making up *all* my life. . . . You see my capital—yielding all my income, intellectual, social, associational, on the old

investment of so many years—my capital is *here*, and to let it all slide would be simply to become bankrupt. Oh if you only, on the other hand, you and Peg and Aleck, *could* walk beside my bath-chair adown this brave Thames-side I would get back into it again (it was some three weeks ago dismissed,) and half live there for the sake of your company. I have a kind of sense that you would be able to live rather pleasantly near me here—if you could once get planted. But of course I on my side understand all your present complications.

*April 16th!* It's really too dismal, dearest Alice, that, breaking off the above at the hour I *had* to, I have been unable to go on with it for so many days. It's now more than a fortnight old; still, though my check was owing to my having of a sudden, just as I rested my pen, to drop perversely into a less decent phase (than I reported to you at the moment of writing) and [from which I] have had with some difficulty to wriggle up again, I am now none the less able to send you no too bad news. I have wriggled up a good deal, and still keep believing in my capacity to wriggle up in general. . . . Suffice if for the moment that I just couldn't, for the time, drive the pen myself—when I am "bad" I feel too demoralised, too debilitated, for this; and it doesn't at all do for me then to push against the grain. Don't feel, all the same, that if I resort this morning to the present help, it is because I am *not* feeling differently—for I really am in an easier way again (I mean of course specifically and "anginally" speaking) and the circumstances of the hour a good deal explain my proceeding thus. I had yesterday a Birthday, an extraordinary, prodigious, portentous, quite public Birthday, of all things in the world, and it has piled up acknowledg-



ments and supposedly delightful complications and arrears at such a rate all round me that in short, Miss Bosanquet being here, I today at least throw myself upon her aid for getting on correspondentially—instead of attending to my proper work, which has, however, kept going none so badly in spite of my last poor fortnight. I will tell you in a moment of my signal honours, but want to mention first that your good note written on receipt of *A Small Boy* has meanwhile come to me and by the perfect fulness of its appreciation gave me the greatest joy. There are several things I want to say to you about the shape and substance of the book—and I will yet; only now I want to get this off absolutely by today's American post, and tell you about the Honours, a little, before you wonder, in comparative darkness, over whatever there may have been in the American papers that you will perhaps have seen; though in two or three of the New York ones more possibly than in the Boston. I send you by this post a copy of yesterday's *Times* and one of the *Pall Mall Gazette*—the two or three passages in which, together, I suppose to have been more probably than not reproduced in N.Y. But I send you above all a copy of the really very beautiful Letter . . . ushering in the quite wonderful array of signatures (as I can't but feel) of my testifying and "presenting" friends: a list of which you perhaps can't quite measure the very charming and distinguished and "brilliant" character without knowing your London better. What I wish I *could* send you is the huge harvest of exquisite, of splendid sheaves of flowers that converted a goodly table in this room, by the time yesterday was waning, into such a blooming garden of complimentary colour as I never dreamed I should, on my own modest premises, almost

bewilderedly stare at, sniff at, all but quite "cry" at. I think I must and shall in fact compass sending you a photograph of the still more glittering tribute dropped upon me—a really splendid "golden bowl," of the highest interest and most perfect taste, which would, in the extremity of its elegance, be too proudly false a note amid my small belongings here if it didn't happen to fit, or to sit, rather, with perfect grace and comfort, on the middle of my chimney-piece, where the rather good glass and some other happy accidents of tone most fortunately consort with it. It is a very brave and artistic (exact) reproduction of a piece of old Charles II plate; the bowl or cup having handles and a particularly charming lid or cover, and standing on an ample round tray or salver; the whole being wrought in solid silver-gilt and covered over with quaint incised little figures of a (in the taste of the time) Chinese intention. In short it's a very beautiful and honourable thing indeed. . . . Against the *giving to me* of the Portrait, presumably by Sargent, if I do succeed in being able to sit for it, I have absolutely and successfully protested. The possession, the attribution or ownership of it, I have insisted, shall be only their matter, that of the subscribing friends. I am sending Harry a copy of the Letter too—but do send him on this as well. You see there *must* be good life in me still when I can gabble so hard. The Book appears to be really most handsomely received hereabouts. It is being treated in fact with the very highest consideration. I hope it is viewed a little in some such mannerly light roundabout yourselves, but I really call for no "notices" whatever. I don't in the least want 'em. What I *do* want is to personally and firmly and intimately encircle Peg and Aleck and their Mother and squeeze them as hard together as

is compatible with squeezing them so tenderly ! With this *tide* of gabble you will surely feel that I shall soon be at you again. And so I shall ! Yours, dearest Alice, and dearest all, ever so and ever so !

HENRY JAMES.

*To Percy Lubbock.*

A copy of H. J.'s letter of thanks was sent to each of the subscribers to the birthday present. He eventually preferred that their names should be given in a postscript to his letter, which follows in its final form.

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
April 21st, 1913.

My dear blest Percy !

I enclose you herewith a sort of provisional apology for a Form of Thanks ! Read it and tell me on Wednesday, when I count on you at 1.45, whether you think it will do—as being on the one hand not too pompous or important and on the other not too free and easy. I have tried to steer a middle way between hysterical emotion and marble immortality ! To any emendation you suggest I will give the eagerest ear, though I have really considered and pondered my expression not a little, studying the pro's and con's as to each *tour*. However, we will earnestly speak of it. The question of exactly where and how my addressees had best figure when the thing is reduced to print you will perhaps have your idea about. For it must seem to you, as it certainly does to me, that their names must in common decency be all drawn out again. . . .

But you will pronounce when we meet—heaven speed the hour!

Yours, my dear Percy, more than ever constantly,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. It seems to me that the little arrangement that really almost *imposes* itself would be that the Printed Thing should begin with my date and address and my Dear Friends All; and that the full list, taking even three complete pages or whatever, should then and there draw itself out; after which, as a fresh paragraph, the body of my little text should begin. Anything else affects me as *more* awkward; and I seem to see you in full agreement with me as to the absolute necessity that every Signer, without exception, shall be addressed.

*To two hundred and seventy Friends.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
April 21st, 1913.

Dear Friends All,

Let me acknowledge with boundless pleasure the singularly generous and beautiful letter, signed by your great and dazzling array and reinforced by a correspondingly bright material gage, which reached me on my recent birthday, April 15th. It has moved me as brave gifts and benedictions can only do when they come as signal surprises. I seem to wake up to an air of breathing goodwill the full sweetness of which I had never yet tasted; though I ask myself now, as a second thought, how the large kindness and hospitality in which I have

so long and so consciously lived among you could fail to act itself out according to its genial nature and by some inspired application. The perfect grace with which it has embraced the just-past occasion for its happy thought affects me, I ask you to believe, with an emotion too deep for stammering words. I was drawn to London long years ago as by the sense, felt from still earlier, of all the interest and association I should find here, and I now see how my faith was to sink deeper foundations than I could presume ever to measure—how my justification was both stoutly to grow and wisely to wait. It is so wonderful indeed to me as I count up your numerous and various, your dear and distinguished friendly names, taking in all they recall and represent, that I permit myself to feel at once highly successful and extremely proud. I had never in the least understood that I was the one or signified that I was the other, but you have made a great difference. You tell me together, making one rich tone of your many voices, almost the whole story of my social experience, which I have reached the right point for living over again, with all manner of old times and places renewed, old wonderments and pleasures reappeared and recaptured—so that there is scarce one of your ranged company but makes good the particular connection, quickens the excellent relation, lights some happy train and flushes with some individual colour. I pay you my very best respects while I receive from your two hundred and fifty pair of hands, and more, the admirable, the inestimable bowl, and while I engage to sit, with every accommodation, to the so markedly indicated “one of you,” my illustrious friend Sargent. With every accommodation, I say, but with this one condition that you yourselves, in your strength and goodness,

remain guardians of the result of his labour—even as I remain all faithfully and gratefully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. And let me say over your names.

[There follows the list of the two hundred and seventy subscribers to the birthday gift.]

*To Mrs. G. W. Prothero.*

Mr. and Mrs. Prothero, already at Rye, had suggested that H. J. should go to Lamb House for Whitsuntide.

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
April 30th, 1913.

Best of Friends Both !

Oh it is a dream of delight, but I should have to climb a perpendicular mountain first. Your accents are all but irresistible, and your company divinely desirable, but if you knew how thoroughly, and for such innumerable good reasons, I am seated here till I am able to leave for a real and workable absence, you would do my poor plea of impossibility justice. I have just conversed with Joan and Kidd, conversed so affably, not to say lovingly, in the luminous kitchen, which somehow let in a derisive glare upon every cranny and crevice of the infatuated scheme. With this fierce light there mingled the respectful jeers of the two ladies themselves, which rose to a mocking (though still deeply deferential) climax for the picture of their polishing off, or dragging violently out of bed, the so dormant and tucked-in house in the ideal couple of hours. Before their attitude I lowered

my lance—easily understanding moreover that their round of London gaieties is still so fresh and spiced a cup to them that to feel it removed from their lips even for a moment is almost more than they can bear. And then the coarse and brutal truth is, further, that I am oh so utterly well fixed here for the moment and so void of physical agility for any kind of somersault. A little while back, while the Birthday raged, I did just look about me for an off-corner; but now there has been a drop and, the blest calm of Whitsuntide descending on the scene here, I feel it would be a kind of lapse of logic to hurry off to where the social wave, hurrying ahead of me, would be breaking on a holiday strand. I *am* so abjectly, so ignobly fond of not “travelling.” To keep up not doing it is in itself for me the most thrilling of adventures. And I am working so well (unberufen!) with my admirable Secretary; I shouldn’t really dare to ask her to join our little caravan, raising it to the number of five, for a fresh tuning-up again. And on the other hand I mayn’t now abandon what I am fatuously pleased to call my work for a single precious hour. Forgive my beastly rudeness. I will write more in a day or two. Do loll in the garden yourselves to your very fill; do cultivate George’s geniality; do steal any volume or set of volumes out of the house that you may like; and do still think gently of your poor ponderous, and thereby, don’t you see? so permanent, old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William James, junior.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 18th, 1913.

Dearest Bill,

I suppose myself to be trying to-day to get off a brief response both to Harry and to dear Peg (whom I owe, much rather, volumes of acknowledgment to;) but I put in first these few words to you and Alice—for the quite wrong reason that the couple of notes just received from you are those that have last come. This is because I feel as if I had worried you a good bit more than helped over the so interesting name-question of the Babe. It wasn't so much an attempted solution, at all, that I the other week hastily rushed into, but only a word or two that I felt I absolutely had to utter, for my own relief, by way of warning against our re-embarking, any of us, on a fresh and possibly interminable career of the tiresome and graceless "Junior." You see I myself suffered from that tag to help out my identity for forty years, greatly disliking it all the while, and with my dislike never in the least understood or my state pitied; and I felt I couldn't be dumb if there was any danger of your Boy's being started unguardedly and *de gaieté de cœur* on a like long course; so probably and desirably very *very* long in his case, given your youth and "prominence," in short your immortal duration. It seemed to me I ought to do *something* to conjure away the danger, though I couldn't go into the matter of exactly *what*, at all, as if we were only, and most delightfully, talking it over at our leisure and face to face—face to face with



the Babe, I mean; as I wish to goodness we were! The different modes of evasion or attenuation, in that American world where designations are so bare and variations, of the accruing or "social" kind, so few, are difficult to go into this distance; and in short all that I meant at all by my attack was just a Hint! I feel so for poor dear Harry's carrying of *his* tag—and as if I myself were directly responsible for it! However, no more of that.

To this machinery the complications arising from the socially so fierce London June inevitably (and in fact mercifully) drive me; for I feel the assault, the attack on one's time and one's strength, even in my so simplified and disqualified state; which it is my one great effort not to allow to be knocked about. However, I of course do succeed in simplifying and in guarding myself enormously; one can't but succeed when the question is so vital as it has now become with me. Which is really but a preface to telling you how much the most interesting thing in the matter has been, during the last three weeks, my regular sittings for my portrait to Sargent; which have numbered now some seven or eight, I forget which, and with but a couple more to come. So the thing is, I make out, very nearly finished, and the head apparently (as I much hope) to have almost nothing more done to it. It is, I infer, a very great success; a number of the competent and intelligent have seen it, and so pronounce it in the strongest terms. . . . In short it seems likely to be one of S.'s very fine things. One is almost full-face, with one's left arm over the corner of one's chair-back and the hand brought round so that the thumb is caught in the arm-hole of one's waistcoat, and said hand therefore, with the fingers a bit folded, entirely visible and "treated." Of course I'm

sitting a little askance in the chair. The canvas comes down to just where my watch-chain (such as it is, poor thing!) is hung across the waistcoat: which latter, in itself, is found to be splendidly (poor thing though it also be) and most interestingly treated. Sargent *can* make such things so interesting—such things as my coat-lappet and shoulder and sleeve too! But what is most interesting, every one is agreed, is the mouth—than which even he has never painted a more living and, as I am told, “expressive”! In fact I can quite see that myself; and really, I seem to feel, the thing will be all that can at the best (the best with such a subject!) have been expected of it. I only wish you and Alice had assisted at some of the sittings—as Sargent likes animated, sympathetic, beautiful, talkative friends to do, in order to correct by their presence too lugubrious expressions. I take for granted I shall before long have a photograph to send you, and then you will be able partially to judge for yourselves.

I grieve over your somewhat sorry account of your own winter record of work, though I allow in it for your habitual extravagance of blackness. Evidently the real meaning of it is that you are getting so *fort* all the while that you kick every rung of your ladder away from under you, by mere uncontrollable force, as you mount and mount. But the rungs, I trust, are all the while being carefully picked up, far below, and treasured; this being Alice's, to say nothing of anybody else's, natural care and duty. Give all my love to her and to the beautiful nursing scrap! I want to say thirty things more to her, but my saying power is too finite a quantity. I gather that this will find you happily, and I trust very conveniently and workably, settled at Chocorua—where may the summer be blest

to you, and the thermometer low, and the motor-runs many! Now I really have to get at Harry! But do send this in any case on to Irving Street, for the sake of the report of the picture. I want them to have the good news of it without delay.

Yours both all affectionately,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Rhoda Broughton.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 25th, 1913.

My dear Rhoda,

I reply to your quite acclaimed letter—if there can be an acclamation of *one!*—by this mechanic aid for the simple reason that, much handicapped as to the free brandish of arm and hand nowadays, I find that the letters thus helped out do get written, whereas those I am too shy or too fearsome or too ceremonious to think anything but my poor scratch of a pen good enough for simply don't come into existence at all. It greatly touches me at any rate to get news of you by your own undiscouraged hand; and it kind of cheers me up about you generally, during your exile from this blest town (which you see *I* continue to bless), that you appear to be in some degree "on the go," and capable of the brave exploit of a country visit. With a Brother to offer you a garden-riot of roses, however, I don't wonder, but the more rejoice, that you were inspired and have been sustained.

Yes, thank you, dear F. Prothero was veracious about the Portrait, as she is about everything:

it is now finished, *parachevé* (I sat for the last time a couple of days ago;) and is nothing less, evidently, than a very fine thing indeed, Sargent at his very best and poor old H. J. not at his worst; in short a living breathing likeness and a masterpiece of painting. I am really quite ashamed to admire it so much and so loudly—it's so much as if I were calling attention to my own fine points. I don't, alas, exhibit a "point" in it, but am all large and luscious rotundity—by which you may see how true a thing it is. And I am sorry to have ceased to sit, in spite of the repeated big holes it made in my precious mornings: J. S. S. being so genial and delightful a *nature de grand maître* to have to do with, and his beautiful high cool studio, opening upon a balcony that overhangs a charming Chelsea green garden, adding a charm to everything. He liked always a friend or two to be in to break the spell of a settled gloom in my countenance by their prattle; though you will doubtless think this effect but little achieved when I tell you that, having myself found the thing, as it grew, more and more like Sir Joshua's Dr. Johnson, and said so, a perceptive friend reinforced me a couple of sittings later by breaking out irrepressibly with the same judgment. . . .

I am sticking on in London, you see, and have got distinctly better with the lapse of the weeks. In fact dear old Town, taken on the absolutely simplified and restricted terms in which I insist on taking it (as compared with all the ancient storm and stress), is distinctly good for me, and the weather keeping cool—*absit omen!*—I am not in a hurry to flee. I shall go to Rye, none the less, within a fortnight. I have just heard with distress that dear Norris has come and gone without making me a sign (I learn by telephone from his club that he left yesterday.) This

has of course been "consideration," but damn *such* consideration. My imagination, soaring over the interval, hangs fondly about the time, next autumn, when you will be, D.V., restored to Cadogan Gardens. I am impatient for my return hither before I have so much as really prepared to go. May the months meanwhile lie light on you! Yours, my dear Rhoda, all faithfully,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Alfred Sutro.*

H. J. had been with Mrs. Sutro to a performance of Henry Bernstein's play, *Le Secret*, with Mme. Simone in the principal part.

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 25th, 1913.

Dear Mrs. Sutro,

Yes, what a sad history of struggles against fate the recital of our whole failure to achieve yesterday in Tite Street does make! It was a sorry business my not having been able to wire you on Saturday, but it wasn't till the Sunday sitting that the change to the Tuesday from the probable Wednesday (through the latter's having become impossible, unexpectedly, to Sargent) was settled. And yesterday was the last, the real last time—it terminated even at 12.30. Any touch more would be simply detrimental, and the hand, to my sense, is now all admirably there. But you must see it some day when you are naturally in town—I can easily arrange for that. I shall be there, I seem to make out, for a considerable number of days yet: Mrs. Wharton comes over from Paris on the 30th for a week, however, and, I apprehend, will

catch me up in *her* relentless Car (pardon any apparent invidious comparison!) for most of the time she is here. That at least is her present programme, but *souvent femme varie*, and that lady not least. I am addressing you, you see, after this mechanic fashion, without apology, for the excellent reason that during these forenoon hours it is my so much the most *expéditif* way. . .

Almost more than missing the *séance* (to which, by the way, Hedworth Williamson came in just at the last with Mrs. Hunter) do I miss talking with you of *Le Secret* last night and of the wondrous demonic little Simone; though of the play, and of Bernstein's extraordinary theatric art themselves more than anything else. I think our friend the Critic said beautifully right things about them in yesterday's Times—but it would be so interesting to have the matter out in more of its aspects too. . . . What most remains with one, in brief, is that the play somehow represents a Case merely, as distinguished, so to speak, from a Situation; the Case being always a thing rather void of connections with and into life at large, and the Situation, dramatically speaking, being largely of interest just by *having* those. Thereby it is that *Le Secret* leaves one nothing to apply, by reflection, and by way of illustration, to one's sense of life in general, but is just a barren little instance, little limited monstrosity, as curious and vivid as you like, but with no moral or morality, good old word, at all involved in it, or projected out of it as an interest. Hence the so *unfertilised* state in which the mutual relations are left! Thereby it's only theatrically, as distinguished from dramatically, interesting, I think; even if it be after that fashion more so, more just theatrically valuable, than anything else of Bernstein's. For *him* it may count as almost superior! And beauti-

fully done, all round, yes—save in the matter of the fat blonde whose after all pretty recent lapse one has to take so comfortably and sympathetically for granted. However, if she had been more sylph-like and more pleasing she wouldn't seem to have been paying for her past at the rate demanded ; and if she had been any way different, in short, would have appeared to know, and to have previously known, too much what she was about to be pathetic enough, victim enough. What a pull the French do get for their drama-form, their straight swift course, by being able to postulate such ladies, for interest, sympathy, edification even, with such a fine absence of what we call explaining ! But this is all now : I must post it on the jump. Do try to put in a few hours in town at some time or other before I go ; and believe me yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Hugh Walpole.*

Lamb House, Rye,

Aug: 21: 13.

. . . Beautiful must be your Cornish land and your Cornish sea, idyllic your Cornish setting, like this flattering, this wonderful summer, and ours here doubtless may claim but a modest place beside it all. Yet as you have with you your Mother and Sister, which I am delighted to hear and whom I gratefully bless, so I can match them with my nephew and niece (the former with me alas indeed but for these 10 or 12 days,) who are an extreme benediction to me. My niece, a charming and interesting young person and *most* conversable, stays, I hope, through the greater part of September, and I even curse that necessary limit—when she returns

to America. . . . I like exceedingly to hear that your work has got so bravely on, and envy you that sovereign consciousness. When it's finished—well, when it's finished let some of those sweet young people, the *bons amis* (yours), come to me for the small change of remark that I gathered from you the other day (you were adorable about it) they have more than once chinked in your ear as from my poor old pocket, and they will see, *you* will, in what coin I shall have paid them. I too am working with a certain shrunken regularity—when not made to lapse and stumble by circumstances (damnably physical) beyond my control. These circumstances tend to come, on the whole (thanks to a great power of patience in my ancient organism,) rather *more* within my management than for a good while back; but to live with a bad and chronic anginal demon preying on one's vitals takes a great deal of doing. However, I didn't mean to write you of that side of the picture (save that it's a large part of that same,) and only glance that way to make sure of your tenderness even when I may seem to you backward and blank. It isn't to exploit your compassion—it's only to be able to feel that I am not without your fond understanding: so far as your blooming youth (*there's* the crack in the fiddle-case!) *can* fondly understand my so otherwise-conditioned age. . . . My desire is to stay on here as late into the autumn as may consort with my condition—I dream of sticking on through November even if possible: Cheyne Walk and the black-barged yellow river will be the more agreeable to me when I get back to them. I make out that you will then be in London again—I mean *by* November, though such a black gulf of time intervenes; and then of course I may look to you to come down to me for a couple of days. It will be the



lowest kind of "jinks"—so halting is my pace ; yet we shall somehow make it serve. Don't say to me, by the way, à propos of jinks—the "high" kind that you speak of having so wallowed in previous to leaving town—that I ever challenge you as to *why* you wallow, or splash or plunge, or dizzily and sublimely soar (into the jinks element,) or whatever you may call it : as if I ever remarked on anything but the absolute inevitability of it for you at your age and with your natural curiosities, as it were, and passions. It's good healthy exercise, when it comes but in bouts and brief convulsions, and it's always a kind of thing that it's good, and considerably final, to *have* done. We must know, as much as possible, in our beautiful art, yours and mine, what we are talking about—and the only way to know is to have lived and loved and cursed and floundered and enjoyed and suffered. I think I don't regret a single "excess" of my responsive youth—I only regret, in my chilled age, certain occasions and possibilities I didn't embrace. Bad doctrine to impart to a young idiot or a duffer, but in place for a young friend (pressed to my heart) with a fund of nobler passion, the preserving, the defying, the dedicating, and which always has the last word ; the young friend who can dip and shake off and go his straight way again when it's time. But we'll talk of all this—it's absolutely late. Who is D. H. Lawrence, who, you think, would interest me ? Send him and his book along — by which I simply mean Inoculate me, at your convenience (don't address me the volume), so far as I can *be* inoculated. I always *try* to let anything of the kind "take." Last year, you remember, a couple of improbabilities (as to "taking") did worm a little into the fortress. (Gilbert Cannan was one.) I have been reading over

Tolstoi's interminable *Peace and War*, and am struck with the fact that I now protest as much as I admire. He doesn't *do* to read over, and that exactly is the answer to those who idiotically proclaim the impunity of such formless shape, such flopping looseness and such a denial of composition, selection and style. He has a mighty fund of life, but the *waste*, and the ugliness and vice of waste, the vice of a not finer *doing*, are sickening. For me he makes "composition" throne, by contrast, in effulgent lustre!

Ever your fondest of the fond,

H. J.

*To Mrs. Archibald Grove,*

Lamb House, Rye.

August 22nd, 1913.

My dear Kate Grove,

Please don't measure by my not-to-be-avoided delay (of three or four—or five, days) to acknowledge it, the degree of pleasure and blest relief your most kind letter represents for me. I have fallen these last years on evil days, physically speaking, and have to do things only when and as I rather difficultly *can*, and not after a prompter fashion. But you give me a blest *occasion*, and I heartily thank you for it. Ever since that so pleasant meeting of ours in Piccadilly toward the end of 1909—nearly four long years ago—have I been haunted with the dreadful sense of a debt to your benevolence that has remained woefully undischarged. I came back to this place that same day—of our happy encounter—to be taken on the morrow with the preliminaries of a wretched illness that dismally developed, that lasted *actively*, in short, for two long years, and that has left me for the rest of my ancient days much compromised and

disqualified (though I should be better of some of it all now—I mean *betterer*!—if I weren't so much older—or olderer!) However, the point is that just as I had begun, on that now far-off occasion, to take the measure of what was darkly before me—that is had been clapped into bed by my Doctor here and a nurse clapped down beside me (the first of a perfect procession)—I heard from you in very kind terms, asking me to come and see you and Archibald in the country—probably at the Pollards inscribed upon your present letter. Well, I couldn't so much as make you a *sign*—my correspondence had so utterly gone to pieces on the spot. Little by little in the aftertime I picked up *some* of those pieces—others are forever scattered to the winds—and this particular piece you see I am picking up now, with a slight painful contortion, only after this lapse of the years! It is too strange and too graceless—or would be so if *you* hadn't just put into it a grace for which, as I say, I can scarce sufficiently thank you. The worst of such disasters and derelictions is that they take such terrific retrospective explanations and that one's courage collapses at all there is to tell, and so the wretched appearance continues. However, I repeat, you have transformed it by your generous condonation—you have helped me to tell you a small scrap of my story. It was on your part a most beautiful inspiration, and I bless my ponderous volume for its communication to you of the impulse. Quite apart from this balm to my stricken conscience, I do rejoice that the fatuous book has beguiled and interested you. I had pleasure in writing it, but I delight in the liberality of your appreciation. But I wish you had told me too something more of yourself and of Grove, more I mean than that you are thus ideally amiable—which I already

knew. Your "we" has a comprehensive looseness, and I should have welcomed more dots on the i's. Almost your only detail is that you were *here* at some comparatively recent hour (I infer,) and that you only gave my little house a beautiful dumb glare and went your way again. Why do you do such things?—they give you almost an air of exulting in them afterwards! If I only had a magic "car" of my own I would jump into it tomorrow and come over to see you at Crowborough—I *was* there in that fashion, by an afternoon lift from a friend, exactly a year ago. My brother William's only daughter, a delightful young woman, and her eldest brother, a most able and eminent young man, are with me at this time, though *he* too briefly, and demand of me, or receive from me, all the attention my reduced energies are capable of in a social (so to speak) and adventurous way, but if anything is possible later on I will do my best toward it. I wish you were both conceivable at luncheon *here*. Do ask yourselves candidly if you aren't—and make me the affirmative sign. I should so like to see you. I recall myself affectionately to Archibald—I think of the ancient wonders, images, scenes—all fantasmagoric now. Yours and his all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William Roughead, W.S.*

Mr. Roughead, at this time a stranger, had sent H. J. some literature of a kind in which he always took a keen interest—the literature of crime. The following refers to the gift of a publication of the Juridical Society of Edinburgh, dealing with trials of witches in the time of James I. Other volumes of the same nature followed, and the correspondence led to a valued friendship with the giver.

Lamb House, Rye.  
August 24th, 1913.

Dear Mr. Roughead,

I succumbed to your Witchery, that is I read your brave pages, the very day they swam into my ken—what a pleasure, by the way, to hang over a periodical page so materially handsome as that of which the Scots members of your great profession “dispose”!—those at least who are worthy. But face to face with my correspondence, and with my age (a “certain,” a very certain, age,) and some of its drawbacks, I am aware of the shrunken nature of my poor old shrunken energies of response in general (once fairly considerable;) and hence in short this little delay. Of a horrible interest and a most ingenious vividness of presentation is all that hideous business in your hands—with the unspeakable King’s figure looming through the caldron-smoke he kicks up to more abominable effect than the worst witch images into which he so fondly seeks to convert other people. He was truly a precious case and quite the sort of one that makes us most ask how the time and place concerned with him could at all stagger under him or successfully stomach him. But the whole, the collective, state of mind and tissue of horrors somehow fall outside of our measure

and sense and exceed our comprehension. The amenability of the victims, the wonder of what their types and characters would at all "rhyme with" among ourselves today, takes more setting forth than it can easily get—even as you figure it or touch on it; and there are too many things (*in* the amenability) as to which one vainly asks one's self what they can too miserably have *meant*. That is the flaw in respect to interest—that the "psychology" of the matter fails for want of more intimate light in the given, in *any* instance. It doesn't seem enough to say that the wretched people were amenable just to torture, or their torturers just to a hideous sincerity of fear; for the selectability of the former must have rested on some aspects or qualities that elude us, and the question of what could pass for the latter as valid appearances, as verifications of the imputed thing, is too abysmal. And the psychology of the loathsome James (oh the Fortunes of Nigel, which Andrew Lang admired!) is of no use in mere glimpses of his "cruelty," which explains nothing, or unless we get it *all* and really enter the horrid sphere. However, I don't want to do that in truth, for the wretched aspects of the creature do a disservice somehow to the so interesting and on the whole so sympathetic appearance of his wondrous mother. That she should have had but one issue of her body and that he should have had to be that particular mixture of all the contemptibilities, "bar none," is too odious to swallow. Of course he had a horrid papa—but he has always been retroactively compromising, and my poor point is simply that he is the more so the more one looks at him (as your rich page makes one do). But I insist too much, and all I really wanted to say is: "Do, very generously, send me the sequel to your present study—my appetite has opened to it too;

but then go back to the dear old human and sociable murders and adulteries and forgeries in which we are so agreeably at home. And don't tell me, for charity's sake, that your supply runs short!" I am greatly obliged to you for that good information as to the accessibility of those modern cases—of which I am on the point of availing myself. It's a kind of relief to me to gather that the sinister Arran—I may take such visions too hard, but it has been *made* sinister to me—hasn't quite answered for you. Here we have been having a wondrous benignant August—may you therefore have had *some* benignity. And may you not feel the least bit pressingly the pull of this letter.

Yours most truly,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. Only send me the next Juridical—and *then* a wee word.

*To Mrs. William James.*

Lamb House, Rye.

August 28th, 1913.

Dearest Alice,

Your Irving St. letter of the 16th has blessedly come, and Harry alas, not so auspiciously, leaves me tomorrow on his way to sail from Southampton on Saturday. But though it's very, *very* late in the evening (I won't tell you how late,) I want this hurried word to go along with him, to express both my joy of hearing from you and my joy of *him*, little as that is expressible. For how can I tell you what it is for me in all this latter time that William's children, and your children, should be such an interest, such a support and such a benediction? Peggy and

Harry, between them, will have crowned this summer with ease and comfort to me, and I know how it will be something of the same to you that they have done so. . . . It makes me think all the while, as it must forever (you will feel, I well know) make *you*, of what William's joy of him would have been—something so bitter rises at every turn from everything that is good for us and that *he* is out of. I have shared nothing happy with the children these weeks (and there have been, thank heaven, many such things) without finding that particular shadow always of a sudden leap out of its lair. But why do I speak to you of this as if I needed to and it weren't with you all the while far more than it can be even with me? The only thing is that to feel it and say it, unspeakable though one's tenderness be, is a sort of dim propitiation of his ghost that hovers yearningly for us—doesn't it?—at once so partakingly near and yet so far off in darkness! However, I throw myself into the imagination that he may blessedly pity *us* far more than we can ever pity *him*; and the great thing is that even our sense of him as sacrificed only keeps him the more intensely with us. . . . Good-night, dearest Alice.

H. J.

*To Howard Sturgis.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Sept: 2nd, 1913.

My dearest of all Howards,

I long so for news of you that nothing but this act of aggression will serve, and that even though I know (none better!) what a heavy, not to say intolerable overburdening of illness is the request that those even too afflicted



to feed themselves shall feed the post with vivid accounts of themselves. But though I don't in the least imagine that you are not feeding yourself (I hope very regularly and daintily,) this is all the same an irresistible surrender to sentiments of which you are the loved object—downright crude affection, fond interest, uncontrollable yearning. Look you, it isn't a *request* for anything, even though I languish in the vague—it's just a renewed "declaration"—of dispositions long, I trust, familiar to you and which my uncertainty itself makes me want, for my relief, to reiterate. A vagueish (which looks like *agueish*, but let the connection particularly forbid!) echo of you came to me shortly since from Rhoda Broughton—more or less to the effect that she believed you to be still in Scotland and still nurse-ridden (which is *my* rude way of putting it;) and this she took for not altogether significant of your complete recovery of ease. However, she is on occasion a rich dark pessimist—which is always the more picturesque complexion; and she may that day but have added a more artful touch to her cheek. I decline to believe that you are not rising by gentle stages to a fine equilibrium unless some monstrous evidence crowds upon me. I have myself little by little left such a weight of misery behind me—really quite shaken off, though ever so slowly, the worst of it, that slowness is to me no unfavouring argument at all, nor is the fact of fluctuations a thing to dismay. One goes unutterably roundabout, but still one goes—and so it is I have *come*. To where I *am*, I mean; which is doubtless where I shall more or less stay. I can *do* with it, for want of anything grander—and it's comparative peace and ease. It isn't what I wish *you*—for I wish and invoke upon you the superlative of these benedictions, and

indeed it would give me a good shove on to the positive myself to know that *your* comparative creeps quietly forward. Don't *resent* creeping—there's an inward joy in it at its best that leaping and bounding don't know. And I'm sure you are having it—even if you still *only* creep—at its best. I live snail-like here, and it's from my modest brown shell that I reach, oh dearest Howard, ever so tenderly forth to you. I am having—*absit* omen!—a very decent little summer. My quite admirable niece Peggy has been with me for some weeks; she is to be so some three more, and her presence is most soothing and supporting. (I can't stand stiff solitude in the large black doses I once could.) . . .

But good-night and take all my blessing—all but a scrap for William. Yours, dearest Howard, so very fondly,

H. J.

*To Mrs. G. W. Prothero.*

The "young man from Texas" was Mr. Stark Young, who had appealed to Mrs. Prothero for guidance in the study of H. J.'s books. H. J. was amused by the request, of which Mrs. Prothero told him, and immediately wrote the following.

Rye.

Sept. 14th, 1913.

This, please, for the delightful young man from Texas, who shews such excellent dispositions. I only want to meet him half way, and I hope very much he won't think I don't when I tell him that the following indications as to five of my productions (splendid number—I glory in the tribute of his appetite!) are all on the basis of the Scribner's (or Macmillan's) collective and revised and prefaced edition of my things, and that if he is not minded somehow to obtain

access to *that* form of them, ignoring any others, he forfeits half, or much more than half, my confidence. So I thus amicably beseech him—! I suggest to give him as alternatives these two slightly differing lists :

1. Roderick Hudson.
2. The Portrait of a Lady.
3. The Princess Casamassima.
4. The Wings of the Dove.
5. The Golden Bowl.

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1. The American.
  2. The Tragic Muse.
  3. The Wings of the Dove.
  4. The Ambassadors.
  5. The Golden Bowl.

The second list is, as it were, the more “advanced.” And when it comes to the shorter Tales the question is more difficult (for characteristic selection) and demands separate treatment. Come to me about that, dear young man from Texas, later on—you shall have your little tarts when you have eaten your beef and potatoes. Meanwhile receive this from your admirable friend Mrs. Prothero.

HENRY JAMES.

*To H. G. Wells.*

The following refers to Mr. Wells's novel, *The Passionate Friends*.

Lamb House, Rye.  
September 21st, 1913.

My dear Wells,

I won't take time to tell you how touched I freshly am by the constancy with which you send me these wonderful books of yours—I am

too impatient to let you know *how* wonderful I find the last. I bare my head before the immense ability of it—before the high intensity with which your talent keeps itself interesting and which has made me absorb the so full-bodied thing in deep and prolonged gustatory draughts. I am of my nature and by the effect of my own “preoccupations” a critical, a *non-naïf*, a questioning, worrying reader—and more than ever so at this end of time, when I jib altogether and utterly at the “fiction of the day” and find no company but yours and that, in a degree, of one or two others possible. To read a novel at all I perform afresh, to my sense, the act of writing it, that is of re-handling the subject according to my own lights and overscoring the author’s form and pressure with my own vision and understanding of *the way*—this, of course I mean, when I see a subject in what he has done and feel its appeal to me as one: which I fear I very often don’t. This produces reflections and reserves—it’s the very measure of my attention and my interest; but there’s nobody who makes these particular reactions less *matter* for me than you do, as they occur—who makes the whole apple-cart so run away that I don’t care if I *don’t* upset it and only want to stand out of its path and see it go. This is because you have so positive a process and method of your own (rare and *almost* sole performer to this tune roundabout us—in fact absolutely sole by the *force* of your exhibition) that there’s an anxious joy in seeing what it does for you and with you. I find you perverse and I find you, on a whole side, unconscious, as I can only call it, but my point is that *with* this heartbreaking leak even sometimes so nearly playing the devil with the boat your talent remains so savoury and what you do so substantial. I adore a rounded objectivity, a

completely and patiently achieved one, and what I mean by your perversity and your leak is that your attachment to the autobiographic form for the *kind of thing* undertaken, the whole expression of actuality, "up to date," affects me as sacrificing what I hold most dear, a precious effect of *perspective*, indispensable, by my fond measure, to beauty and authenticity. Where there needn't so much be question of that, as in your hero's rich and roaring impressionism, his expression of his own experience, intensity and avidity as a whole, you are magnificent, there your ability prodigiously triumphs and I grovel before you. This is the way to take your book, I think—with Stratton's *own* picture (I mean of himself and *his* immediate world felt and seen with such exasperated and oh such simplified impatiences) as its subject exclusively. So taken it's admirably sustained, and the life and force and wit and humour, the imagination and arrogance and genius with which you keep it up, are tremendous and all your own. I think this projection of Stratton's rage of reflections and observations and world-visions is in its vividness and humour and general bigness of attack, a most masterly thing to have done. His South Africa etc. I think really sublime, and I can do beautifully with *him* and his 'ideas' altogether—he is, and they are, an immense success. Where I find myself doubting is where I gather that you yourself see your subject more particularly—and where I rather feel it escape me. That is, to put it simply—for I didn't mean to draw this out so much, and it's 2 o'clock a.m. !—the hero's prodigiously clever, foreshortened, impressionising *report* of the heroine and the relation (which last is, I take it, for you, the subject) doesn't affect me as the real vessel of truth about them; in short, with all the beauty you

have put into it—and much of it, especially at the last, is admirably beautiful—I don't care a fig for the hero's report *as an account of the matter*. You didn't mean a sentimental 'love story' I take it—you meant ever so much more—and your way strikes me as *not* the way to give the truth about the woman of our hour. I don't think you *get* her, or at any rate give her, and all through one hears your remarkable—your wonderful!—reporting manner and voice (up to last week, up to last night,) and not, by my persuasion, hers. In those letters she writes at the last it's for me all Stratton, all masculinity and intellectual superiority (of the most real,) all a more dazzling journalistic talent than I observe any woman anywhere (with all respect to the cleverness they exhibit) putting on record. It isn't in these terms of immediate—that is of her pretended *own* immediate irony and own comprehensive consciousness, that I see the woman made real at all; and by so much it is that I should be moved to take, as I say, such liberties of reconstruction. But I don't in the least *want* to take them, as I still more emphatically say—for what you *have* done has held me deliciously intent and made me feel anew with thanks to the great Author of all things what an invaluable form and inestimable art it is! Go on, go on and do it as you like, so long as you *keep* doing it; your faculty is of the highest price, your temper and your hand form one of the choicest treasures of the time; my effusive remarks are but the sign of my helpless subjection and impotent envy, and I am yours, my dear Wells, all gratefully and faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Logan Pearsall Smith.*

Mr. Pearsall Smith had sent H. J. the *Poems of Digby Mackworth Dolben*, the young writer whose rare promise was cut short by his accidental death in 1867. His poems were edited in 1913, with a biographical introduction, by Mr. Robert Bridges, a friend and contemporary of Dolben at Eton.

Lamb House, Rye.  
October 27th, 1913.

My dear Logan,

I thank you very kindly for the other bounties which have followed the bounty of your visit—beginning with your vivid and charming letter, a chronicle of such happy homeward adventure. I greatly enjoyed our so long delayed opportunity for free discourse, and hold that any less freedom would have done it no due honour at all. I like to think on the contrary that we have planted the very standard of freedom, very firmly, in my little oak parlour, and that it will hang with but comparative heaviness till you come back at some favouring hour and help me to give its folds again to the air. The munificence of your two little books I greatly appreciate, and have promptly appropriated the very interesting contents of Bridges' volume. (The small accompanying guide gives me more or less the key to *his* proper possessive.) The disclosure and picture of the wondrous young Dolben have made the liveliest impression on me, and I find his personal report of him very beautifully and tenderly, in fact just perfectly, done. Immensely must one envy him the possession of such a memory—recovered and re-stated, sharply rescued from the tooth of time, after so many piled-up years. Extraordinarily interesting I think the young genius himself, by virtue of his rare special gift, and

even though the particular preoccupations out of which it flowers, their whole note and aspect, have in them for me something positively anti-pathetic. Uncannily, I mean, does the so precocious and direct avidity for all the paraphernalia of a complicated ecclesiasticism affect me—as if he couldn't possibly have come to it, or, as we say, gone for it, by experience, at that age—so that there is in it a kind of implication of the insincere and the merely imitational, the cheaply “romantic.” However, he was clearly born with that spoon in his mouth, even if he might have spewed it out afterwards—as one wonders immensely whether he wouldn't. In fact that's the interest of him—that it's the privilege of such a rare young case to make one infinitely wonder how it might or mightn't have been for him—and Bridges seems to me right in claiming that no *equally* young case has ever given us ground for so *much* wonder (in the personal and aesthetic connection.) Would his “ritualism” have yielded to more life and longer days and his quite prodigious, but so closely associated, gift have yielded *with* that (as though indissolubly mixed with it)? Or would a big development of inspiration and form have come? Impossible to say of course—and evidently he could have been but most fine and distinguished whatever should have happened. Moreover it is just as we have him, and as Bridges has so scrupulously given him, that he so touches and charms the imagination—and how instinctive poetic mastery was of the essence, was the most rooted of all things, in him, a faculty or mechanism almost abnormal, seems to me shown by the thinness of his letters compared with the thickness and maturity of his verse. But how can one talk, and how can he be anything but wrapped, for our delightful



uncertainty, in the silver mists of morning?— which one mustn't so much as want to breath upon too hard, much less clear away. They are an immense felicity to him and leave him a most particular little figure in the great English roll. I sometimes go to Windsor, and the very next one I shall peregrinate over to Eton on the chance of a sight of his portrait.

Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To C. Hagberg Wright.*

Lamb House, Rye.

Oct. 31st, 1913.

Very dear Hagberg—(Don't be alarmed—it's only *me*!)

I have for a long time had it at heart to write to you—as to which I hear you comment: Why the hell then didn't you? Well, because my poor old *initiative* (it isn't anything indecent, though it looks so) has become in these days, through physical conditions, extremely impaired and inapt—and when once, some weeks ago, I had let a certain very right and proper moment pass, the very burden I should have to lift in the effort to attenuate that delinquency seemed more formidable every time I looked at it. This burden, or rather, to begin with, this delinquency, lay in the fact of my neither having signed the appeal about the Russian prisoners which you had sent me for the purpose with so noble and touching a confidence, nor had the decency to write you a word of attenuation or explanation. I *should*, I feel now, have signed it, for *you* and without question and simply because you asked it—against my own private judgment in fact; for that's exactly

the sort of thing I should like to do for you—publicly and consciously make a fool of myself: *as* (even though I grovel before you *generally* speaking) I feel that signing would have amounted to my doing. I felt that at the time—but also wanted just to oblige you—if oblige you it might! “Then why the hell didn’t you?” I hear you again ask. Well, again, very dear Hagberg, because I was troubled and unwell—very, and uncertain—very, and doomed for the time to drift, to bend, quite helplessly; letting the occasion get so out of hand for me that I seemed unable to recover it or get back to it. The more shame to me, I allow, since it wasn’t a question then of my initiative, but just of the responsive and the accommodating: at any rate the question worried me and I weakly temporised, meaning at the same time independently to write to you—and then my disgrace had so accumulated that there was more to say about it than I could tackle: which constituted the deterrent *burden* above alluded to. You will do justice to the impeccable chain of my logic, and when I get back to town, as I now very soon shall (by the 15th—about—I hope,) you will perhaps do even *me* justice—far from impeccable though I personally am. I mean when we can talk again, at our ease, in that dear old gorgeous gallery—a pleasure that I shall at once seek to bring about. One reason, further, of my graceless failure to try and tell you why (why I was distraught about signing,) was that when I *did* write I wanted awfully to be able to propose to you, all hopefully, to come down to me here for a couple of days (perhaps you admirably would have done so;) but was in fact so inapt, in my then condition, for any decent or graceful discharge of the office of host—thanks, as I say, to my beastly physical consciousness—

that it took all the heart out of me. I am comparatively better now—but straining toward Carlyle Mansions and Pall Mall. It was above all when I read your so interesting notice of Tolstoy's Letters in the Times that I wanted to make you a sign—but even that initiative failed. Please understand that nothing will induce me to allow you to make the least acknowledgment of this. I shall be horrified, mind you, if you take for me a grain of your so drained and despoiled letter-energy. Keep whatever mercy I may look to you for till we meet. I don't despair of melting you a little toward your faithfullest

HENRY JAMES.

*To Robert Bridges.*

This continues the subject dealt with in the letter to Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith of Oct. 27, 1913.

Lamb House, Rye.  
Nov. 7, 1913.

My dear Bridges,

How delightful to hear from you in this generously appreciative way!—it makes me very grateful to Logan for having reported to you of my pleasure in your beautiful disclosure of young Dolben—which seems to me such a happy chance for you to have had, in so effective conditions, after so many years—I mean as by the production of cards from up your sleeve. My impression of your volume was indeed a very lively one—it gave me a really acute emotion to thank you for: which is a luxury of the spirit quite rare and refreshing at my time of day. Your picture of your extraordinary young friend suggests so much beauty, such a fine young individual, and

yet both suggests it in such a judging and, as one feels, truth-keeping a way, that the effect is quite different from that of the posthumous tribute to the early-gathered in general—it inspires a peculiar confidence and respect. Difficult to do I can well imagine the thing to have been—keeping the course between the too great claim and the too timid; and this but among other complicated matters. I feel however that there is need, in respect to the poor boy's note of inspiration, of no shade of timidity at all—of so absolutely distinguished a reality is that note, given the age at which it sounded: such fineness of impulse and such fineness of art—one doesn't really at all know where such another instance lurks—in the like condition. What an interesting and beautiful one to have had such a near view of—in the golden age, and to have been able to recover and reconstruct with such tenderness—of the measured and responsible sort. How could you *not* have had the emotion which, as you rightly say, can be such an extraordinary (on occasion such a miracle-working) quickener of memory!—and yet how could you not also, I see, feel shy of some of the divagations in that line to which your subject is somehow formed rather to lend itself! Your tone and tact seem to me perfect—and the rare little image is embedded in them, so safely and cleanly, for duration—which is a real “service, from you, to literature” and to our sum of intelligent life. And you make one ask one's self just enough, I think, what he would have *meant* had he lived—without making us do so too much. I don't quite see, myself, what he would have meant, and the result is an odd kind of concurrence in his charming, flashing catastrophe which is different from what most such accidents, in the case of the young of high promise, make

one feel. However, I do envy you the young experience of your own, and the abiding sense of him in his actuality, just as you had and have them, and your having been able to intervene with such a light and final authority of taste and tenderness. I say final because the little clear medallion will hang there exactly as you have framed it, and your volume is the very condition of its hanging. There should be *absolutely* no issue of the poems without your introduction. This is odd or anomalous considering what the best of them are, bless them!—but it is exactly the best of them that most want it. I hear the poor young spirit call on you out of the vague to stick to him. But you always will.—I find myself so glad to be writing to you, however, that I only now become aware that the small hours of the a.m. are getting larger. . .

Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To André Raffalovich.*

This refers to the gift of the *Last Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, edited by Father Gray (1904).

Lamb House, Rye.  
November 7th, 1913.

Dear André Raffalovich,

I thank you again for your letter, and I thank you very kindly indeed for the volume of Beardsley's letters, by which I have been greatly touched. I knew him a little, and he was himself to my vision touching, and extremely individual; but I hated his productions and thought them extraordinarily base—and couldn't find (perhaps didn't try enough to find!) the

formula that reconciled this baseness, aesthetically, with his being so perfect a case of the artistic spirit. But now the personal spirit in him, the beauty of nature, is disclosed to me by your letter as wonderful and, in the conditions and circumstances, deeply pathetic and interesting. The amenity, the intelligence, the patience and grace and play of mind and of temper—how charming and individual an exhibition! . . . And very right have you been to publish the letters, for which Father Gray's claim is indeed supported. The poor boy remains quite one of the few distinguished images on the roll of young English genius brutally clipped, a victim of victims, given the vivacity of his endowment. I am glad I have three or four very definite—though one of them rather disconcerting—recollections of him.

Very curious and interesting your little history of your migration to Edinburgh—on the social aspect and intimate identity of which you must, I imagine, have much gathered light to throw. . . And you are still young enough to find La Province meets your case too. It is because I am now so very far from that condition that London again (to which I return on the 20th) has become possible to me for longer periods: I am so old that I have shamelessly to simplify, and the simplified London that in the hustled and distracted years I vainly invoked, has come round to me easily now, and fortunately meets my case. I shall be glad to see you there, but I *won't*—thank you, no!—come to meat with you at Claridge's. One doesn't go to Claridge's if one simplifies. I am obliged now absolutely *never* to dine or lunch out (a bad physical ailment wholly imposes this :) but I hope you will come to luncheon with *me*, since you have free range—on very different vittles from <sup>the</sup> Claridge,

however, if you can stand that. I count on your having still more then to tell me, and am yours most truly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Henry James, junior.*

In quoting some early letters of William James's in *Notes of a Son and Brother*, H. J. had not thought it necessary to reproduce them with absolutely literal fidelity. The following interesting account of his procedure was written in answer to some queries from his nephew on the subject.

Lamb House, Rye,  
November 15th-18th, 1913.

Dearest Harry,

. . . It is very difficult, and even pretty painful, to try to put forward after the fact the considerations and emotions that have been intense for one in the long ferment of an artistic process: but I must nevertheless do something toward making you see a little perhaps how . . . the editing of those earliest things other than "rigidly" had for me a sort of exquisite inevitability. From the moment of those of my weeks in Cambridge of 1911 during which I began, by a sudden turn of talk with your Mother, to dally with the idea of a "Family Book," this idea took on for me a particular light, the light which hasn't varied, through all sorts of discomfitures and difficulties—and disillusionments, and in which in fact I have put the thing through. That turn of talk was the germ, it dropped the seed. Once when I had been "reminiscing" over some matters of your Dad's and my old life of the time previous, far previous, to her knowing us, over some memories of our Father and Mother and the rest of us, I had moved her to exclaim with the most generous

appreciation and response, "Oh Henry, why don't you *write* these things?"—with such an effect that after a bit I found myself wondering vaguely whether I *mighn't* do something of the sort. But it dated from those words of your Mother's, which gave me the impulse and determined the spirit of my vision—a spirit and a vision as far removed as possible from my mere isolated documentation of your Father's record. We talked again, and still again, of the "Family Book," and by the time I came away I felt I had somehow found my inspiration, though the idea could only be most experimental, and all at the mercy of my putting it, perhaps defeatedly, to the proof. It was such a very special and delicate and discriminated thing to do, and only governable by proprieties and considerations all of its own, as I should evidently, in the struggle with it, more and more find. This is what I did find above all in coming at last to work these Cambridge letters into the whole harmony of my text—the general purpose of which was to be a reflection of all the amenity and felicity of our young life of that time at the highest pitch that was consistent with perfect truth—to show us all at our best for characteristic expression and colour and variety and everything that would be charming. And when I laid hands upon the letters to use as so many touches and tones in the picture, I frankly confess I seemed to see them in a better, or at all events in another light, here and there, than those rough and rather illiterate copies I had from you showed at their face value. I found myself again in such close relation with your Father, such a revival of relation as I hadn't known since his death, and which was a passion of tenderness for doing the best thing by him that the material allowed, and which I seemed to feel



him in the room and at my elbow asking me for as I worked and as he listened. It was as if he had said to me on seeing me lay my hands on the weak little relics of our common youth, "Oh but you're not going to give me away, to hand me over, in my raggedness and my poor accidents, quite unhelped, unfriendly: you're going to do the very best for me you *can*, aren't you, and since you appear to be making such claims for me you're going to let me seem to justify them as much as I possibly may?"

And it was as if I kept spiritually replying to this that he might indeed trust me to handle him with the last tact and devotion—that is do with him everything I seemed to feel him *like*, for being kept up to the amenity pitch. These were small things, the very smallest, they appeared to me all along to be, tiny amendments in order of words, degrees of emphasis &c., to the end that he should be more easily and engagingly readable and thereby more tasted and liked—from the moment there was no excess of these *soins* and no violence done to his real identity. Everything the letters meant affected me so, in all the business, as of *our* old world only, mine and his alone together, with every item of it intimately known and remembered by me, that I daresay I did instinctively regard it at last as all *my* truth, to do what I would with. . . . I have to the last point the instinct and the sense for fusions and interrelations, for framing and encircling (as I think I have already called it) every part of my stuff in every other—and that makes a danger when the frame and circle play over too much upon the image. Never again shall I stray from my proper work—the one in which that danger is the reverse of one and becomes a rightness and a beauty. . . .

I may mention however that your exception that particularly caught my eye—to “poor old Abraham” for “poor old Abe”—was a case for change that I remember feeling wholly irresistible. Never, never, under our Father’s roof did we talk of Abe, either *tout court* or as “Abe Lincoln”—it wasn’t conceivable: Abraham Lincoln he was for us, when he wasn’t either Lincoln or Mr. Lincoln (the Western note and the popularization of “Abe” were quite away from us *then*;) and the form of the name in your Dad’s letter made me reflect how off, how far off in his queer other company than ours I must at the time have felt him to be. You will say that this was just a reason for leaving it so—and so in a sense it was. But I could *hear* him say Abraham and couldn’t hear him say Abe, and the former came back to me as sincere, also graver and tenderer and more like ourselves, among whom I couldn’t imagine any “Abe” ejaculation under the shock of his death as possible. . . . However, I am not pretending to pick up any particular challenge to my appearance of wantonness—I should be able to justify myself (*when* able) only out of such abysses of association, and the stirring up of these, for vindication, is simply a strain that stirs up tears.

Yours, dearest Harry, all affectionately,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

The portrait of H. J. (together with the bust by Mr. Derwent Wood) had been on exhibition to the subscribers in Mr. Sargent's studio in Tite Street. The "slight flaw in the title" had been the accidental omission of the subscribers' names in the printed announcement sent to them, whereby the letter opened familiarly with "Dear"—without further formality. It was partly to repair the oversight that H. J. had "put himself on exhibition" each day beside the portrait.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
December 18th, 1913.

My dear Gosse,

The exquisite incident in Tite Street having happily closed, I have breathing time to thank you for the goodly Flaubert volume, which safely arrived yesterday and which helps me happily out of my difficulty. You shall receive it again as soon as I have made my respectful use of it.

The exhibition of the Portrait came to a most brilliant end to-day, with a very great affluence of people. (There have been during the three days an immense number.) It has been a great and charming success—I mean the View has been; and the work itself acclaimed with an unanimity of admiration and, literally, of *intelligence*, that I can intimately testify to. For I really put myself on exhibition beside it, each of the days, morning and afternoon, and the translation (a perfect Omar Khayyam, *quoi!*) visibly left the original nowhere. I *attended*—most assiduously; and can really assure you that it has been a most beautiful and flawless episode. The slight original flaw (in the title) I sought to bury under a mountain of flowers,

till I found that it didn't in the least do to "explain it away," as every one (like the dear Raneé) said: they exclaimed too ruefully "Ah, don't tell me you didn't *mean* it!" After which I let it alone, and speedily recognised that it was really *the* flower—even if but a little wayward wild flower!—of our success. I am pectorally much spent with affability and emissions of voice, but as soon as the tract heals a little I shall come and ask to be heard in your circle. Be meanwhile at great peace and ease, at perfect rest about everything.

Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Bruce L. Richmond.*

The projected article on "The New Novel" afterwards appeared in two numbers of the *Times Literary Supplement*, and was reprinted in *Notes on Novelists*.

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

December 19th, 1913.

Dear Bruce Richmond,

Your good letter of a day or two ago is most interesting and suggestive and puts to me as lucidly as possible the questions with which the appearance of my so copious George Sand is involved. I have been turning the matter earnestly over, and rather think I had best tell you now at once in what form it presses on myself. This forces me to consider it in a particular light. It has come up for me that I shall be well advised (from my own obscure point of view!) to collect into a volume and publish at an early date a number of ungathered papers that have appeared here and there during the last fifteen years; these being mainly

concerned with the tribe of the Novelists. This involves my asking your leave to include in the Book the article on Balzac of a few months ago, and my original idea was that if the G.S. should appear in the Supplement at once, you would probably authorize my reprinting *it* also after a decent little interval. As the case stands, and as I so well understand it on your showing—the case for the Supplement I mean—I am afraid that I shall really *need* the G.S. paper for the Volume before you will have had time to put it forth at your entire convenience—the only thing I would have wished you to consider. What should you say to my withdrawing the paper in question from your indulgent hands, and—as the possibility glimmers before me—making you a compensation in the way of something addressed with greater actuality and more of a certain current significance to the Spring Fiction Number that you mention? (The words, you know, if you can forgive my irreverence—I divine in fact that you share it!—somehow suggest competition with a vast case of plate-glass “window-dressing” at Selfridge’s!) The G.S. isn’t really a very fit or near thing for the purpose of such a number: that lady is as a fictionist too superannuated and rococo at the present time to have much bearing on any of those questions pure and simple. My article really deals with her on quite a different side—as you would see on coming to look into it. Should you kindly surrender it to me again I would restore to it four or five pages that I excised in sending it to you—so monstrously had it rounded itself!—and make it thereby a still properer thing for my Book, where it would add itself to two other earlier studies of the same subject, as the Balzac of the Supplement will likewise do. And if you ask me what you

then gain by your charming generosity I just make bold to say that there looms to me (though I have just called it glimmering) the conception of a paper really *related* to our own present ground and air—which shall gather in several of the better of the younger generation about us, some half dozen of whom I think I can make out as treatable, and try to do under *their* suggestion something that may be of real reference to our conditions, and of some interest about them or help for them. . . . Do you mind my going so far as to say even, as a battered old practitioner, that I have sometimes yearningly wished I might intervene a little on the subject of the Supplement's Notices of Novels—in which, frankly, I seem to have seen, often, so many occasions missed! Of course the trouble is that all the books in question, or most of them at least, are such wretchedly poor occasions in themselves. If it hadn't been for this I think I should have two or three times quite said to you: "Won't you let *me* have a try?" But when it came to considering I couldn't alas, probably, either have read the books or pretended to give time and thought to them. It is in truth only because I half persuade myself that there are, as I say, some half a dozen *selectable* cases that the possibility hovers before me. Will you consider at your leisure the plea thus put? I shouldn't want my paper back absolutely at once, though in the event of your kindly gratifying me I should like it before very long.

I am really working out a plan of approach to your domicile in the conditions most favourable to my seeing you as well as Elena, and it will in due course break upon you, if it doesn't rather take the form of my trying to drag you both hither!

Believe me all faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Hugh Walpole.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
Jan. 2, 1914.

... I have just despatched your inclosure to P. L. at *I, Dorotheergasse 6, Vienna*; an address that I recommend your taking a note of; and I have also made the reflection that the fury, or whatever, that Edinburgh inspires you with ought, you know, to do the very opposite of drying up the founts of your genius in writing to me—since you say your letter would have been other (as it truly might have been longer) didn't you suffer so from all that surrounds you. That's the very *most* juvenile logic possible—and the juvenility of it (which yet in a manner touches me) is why I call you retrogressive—by way of a long stroke of endearment. *There* was exactly an admirable matter for you to write me *about*—a matter as to which you are strongly and abundantly feeling; and in a relation which lives on communication as ours surely should, and would (save for starving,) such occasions fertilise. However, of course the terms are easy on which you extract communication from me, and always have been, and always will be—so that there's doubtless a point of view from which your reservations (another fine word) are quite right. I'm glad at any rate that you've been reading Balzac (whose "romantic" side *is* rot!) and a great contemporary of your own even in his unconsidered trifles. *I've* just been reading Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* and finding in it an unexpected amount of talent and life. Really a very interesting and remarkable performance, I think, in spite of a considerable, or large, element

of waste and irresponsibility—*selection* isn't in him—and at one and the same time so extremely young (he too) and so confoundingly mature. It has the feature of improving so as it goes on, and disposes me much to read, if I can, its immediate predecessor. You must tell me again what you know of him (I've forgotten what you *did* tell me, more or less,) but in your own good time. I think—I mean I blindly feel—I should be *with* you about Auld Reekie—which somehow hasn't a right to be so handsome. But I long for illustrations—at your own good time. We have emerged from a very clear and quiet Xmas—quiet for *me*, save for rather a large assault of correspondence. It weighs on me still, so this is what I call—and you will too—very brief. . . . I wish you the very decentest New Year that ever was. Yours, dearest boy, all affectionately,

H. J.

*To Compton Mackenzie.*

It will be recalled that Edward Compton, Mr. Mackenzie's father, had played the part of Christopher Newman in H. J.'s play *The American*, produced in 1891.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
Jan. 21, 1914.

My dear "Monty Compton!"—

For that was, I think, as I first heard you named—by a worthy old actress of your father's company who, when we were rehearsing *The American* in some touring town to which I had gone for the purpose, showed me with touching elation a story-book she had provided for you on the occasion of your birthday. That story-book, weighted with my blessing on it,



evidently sealed your vocation—for the sharpness of my sense that you are really a prey to the vocation was what, after reading you, I was moved to emphasise to Pinker. I am glad he let you know of this, and it gives me great pleasure that you have written to me—the only abatement of which is learning from you that you are in such prolonged exile on grounds of health. May that dizzying sun of Capri cook every peccant humour out of you. As to this untowardness I mean, frankly, to inquire of your Mother—whom I am already in communication with on the subject of going to see her to talk about you! For that, my dear young man, I feel as a need: with the force that I find and so much admire in your talent your *genesis* becomes, like the rest of it, interesting and remarkable to me; you are so rare a case of the *kind* of reaction from the theatre—and from so *much* theatre—and the reaction in itself is rare—as seldom taking place; and when it does it is mostly, I think, away from the arts altogether—it is violent and utter. But your pushing straight through the door into literature and then closing it so tight behind you and putting the key in your pocket, as it were—that strikes me as unusual and brilliant! However, it isn't to go into all that that I snatch these too few minutes, but to thank you for having so much arrested my attention, as by the effect of *Carnival* and *Sinister Street*, on what I confess I am for the most part (as a consequence of some thankless experiments) none too easily beguiled by, a striking exhibition by a member of the generation to which you belong. When I wrote to Pinker I had only read *S.S.*, but I have now taken down *Carnival* in persistent short draughts—which is how I took *S.S.* and is how I take anything I take at

all ; and I have given myself still further up to the pleasure, quite to the emotion, of intercourse with a young talent that really moves one to hold it to an account. Yours strikes me as very living and real and sincere, making me care for it—to anxiety—care above all for what shall become of it. You ought, you know, to do only some very fine and ripe things, really solid and serious and charming ones ; but your dangers are almost as many as your aspects, and as I am a mere monster of *appreciation* when I read—by which I mean of the critical passion—I would fain lay an earnest and communicative hand on you and hypnotize or otherwise bedevil you into proceeding as I feel you most *ought* to, you know. The great point is that I would so fain personally see you—that we may talk ; and I do very much wish that you *had* given me a chance at one of those moments when you tell me you inclined to it, and then held off. You are so intelligent, and it's a blessing—whereby I prefigure it as a luxury to have a go at you. I am to be in town till the end of June—I *hibernate* no more at Rye ; and if you were only to turn up a little before that it would be excellent. Otherwise you must indeed come to me there. I wish you all profit of all your experience, some of it lately, I fear, rather harsh, and all experience of your genius—which I also wish myself. I *think* of Sinister Street II, and am yours most truly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William Roughead, W.S.*

Mr. Roughead had sent H. J. his edition of the trial of Mary Blandy, the notable murderess, who was hung in 1752 for poisoning her father.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
January 29th, 1914.

Dear Mr. Roughead,

I devoured the tender Blandy in a single feast; I thank you most kindly for having anticipated so handsomely my appetite; and I highly appreciate the terms in general, and the concluding ones in particular, in which you serve her up. You tell the story with excellent art and animation, and it's quite a gem of a story in its way, History herself having put it together as with the best compositional method, a strong sense for sequences and the proper march, order and *time*. The only thing is that, as always, one wants to know *more*, more than the mere evidence supplies—and wants it even when as in this case one feels that the people concerned were after all of so dire a simplicity, so primitive a state of soul and sense, that the exhibition they make tells or expresses about all there was of them. Dear Mary must have consisted but of two or three pieces, one of which was a strong and simple carnal affinity, as it were, with the stinking little Cranstoun. Yet, also, one would like to get a glimpse of how an apparently normal young woman of her class, at that period, could have viewed such a creature in such a light. The light would throw itself on the Taste, the sense of proportion, of the time. However, dear Mary was a clear barbarian, simply. Enfin!—as one must always wind up these matters by exhaling. I continue to have

escaped a further sense of — and as I think I have told you I cultivate the exquisite art of ignorance. Yet not of Blandy, Pritchard and Co.—*there*, perversely, I am all for knowledge. Do continue to feed in me that languishing need, and believe me all faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

The two novels referred to in the following are M. Marcel Proust's *Du Côté de chez Swann* and M. Abel Bonnard's *La Vie et l'Amour*.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

February 25th, 1914.

Dearest Edith,

The nearest I have come to receipt or possession of the interesting volumes you have so generously in mind is to have had *Bernstein's* assurance, when I met him here some time since, that *he* would give himself the delight of sending me the Proust production, which he learned from me that I hadn't seen. I tried to dissuade him from this excess, but nothing would serve—he was too yearningly bent upon it, and we parted with his asseveration that I might absolutely count on this tribute both to poor Proust's charms and to my own. But depuis lors—! he has evidently been less “en train” than he was so good as to find *me*. So that I shall indeed be “very pleased” to receive the “Swann” and the “Vie et l'Amour” from you at your entire convenience. It is indeed beautiful of you to think of these little deeds of kindness, little words of love (or is it the other way round?) What I want above all to thank you for, however, is your so brave backing in the matter of my disgarnished gums. That I am doing right

is already unmistakable. It won't make me "well"; nothing will do that, nor do I complain of the muffled miracle; but it will make me mind less being ill—in short it will make me better. As I say, it has already done so, even with my sacrifice for the present imperfect—for I am "keeping on" no less than eight pure pearls, in front seats, till I can deal with them in some less exposed and exposing conditions. Meanwhile tons of implanted and domesticated gold &c (one's caps and crowns and bridges being *most* anathema to Des Vœux, who regards them as so much installed metallic poison) have, with everything they fondly clung to, been, less visibly, eradicated; and it is enough, as I say, to have made a marked difference in my felt state. That is the point, for the time—and I spare you further details. . . .

Yours de cœur,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Dr. J. William White.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

March 2nd, 1914.

My dear J. William,

I won't pretend it isn't an aid and comfort to me to be able to thank you for your so brilliant and interesting overflow from Sumatra in this mean way—since from the point of view of such a life as you are leading nothing I could possibly do in my poor sphere and state would seem less mean than anything else, and I therefore might as well get the good of being legible. I am such a votary and victim of the single impression and the imperceptible adventure, picked up by accident and cherished, as it were, in secret,

that your scale of operation and sensation would be for me the most choking, the most fatal of programmes, and I should simply go ashore at Sumatra and refuse ever to fall into line again. But that is simply my contemptible capacity, which doesn't want a little of five million things, but only requires [much] of three or four; as to which *then*, I confess, my requirements are inordinate. But I am so glad, for the world and for themselves, above all for you and Letitia, that many great persons, and especially you two, are constructed on nobler lines, with stouter organs and longer breaths, to say nothing of purses, that I don't in the least mind your doing such things if *you* don't; and most positively and richly enjoy sitting under the warm and fragrant spray of the enumeration of them. Keep it up therefore, and don't let me hear of your daring to skip a single page, or dodge a single prescription, of the programme and the dose! . . .

I am signing, with J. S. S., three hundred very fine photographs of the Portrait, ever so much finer still, that he did of me last summer, and which I think you know about—in order that they be sent to my friends, of whom you are not the least; so that you will find one in Rittenhouse Square on your return thither, if with the extraordinarily dissipated life you lead you do really get back. With it will wait on you probably this, which I hope won't be sent either to meet or to follow you; I really can't even to the extent of a letter personally participate in your dissipation while it's at its worst. How embarrassed poor Letitia must truly be, if she but dared to confess it, at finding herself so associated; for that is not *her* nature; *my* life here, had she but consented to share it, would be so much more congruous with *that*! I don't

quite gather when you expect to reach these shores—since my brain reels at the thought of your re-embarking for them after you reach your own at the climax of your orgy. I realise all that these passions are capable of leading you on to, and therefore shall not be surprised if you do pursue them without a break—shall in fact even be delighted to think I may see you gloriously approach by just sitting right here at this window, which commands so the prospect. But goodbye, dear good friends; gather your roses while ye may and *don't* neglect this blighted modest old bud, your affectionate friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Henry Adams.*

The book sent to Mr. Adams was *Notes of a Son and Brother*, now just published.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 21, 1914.

My dear Henry,

I have your melancholy outpouring of the 7th, and I know not how better to acknowledge it than by the full recognition of its unmitigated blackness. *Of course* we are lone survivors, of course the past that was our lives is at the bottom of an abyss—if the abyss *has* any bottom; of course, too, there's no use talking unless one particularly *wants* to. But the purpose, almost, of my printed divagations was to show you that one *can*, strange to say, still want to—or at least can behave as if one did. Behold me therefore so behaving—and apparently capable of continuing to do so. I still find my consciousness interesting—under *cultivation* of the interest. Cultivate it *with* me,

dear Henry—that's what I hoped to make you do—to cultivate yours for all that it has in common with mine. *Why* mine yields an interest I don't know that I can tell you, but I don't challenge or quarrel with it—I encourage it with a ghastly grin. You see I still, in presence of life (or of what you deny to be such,) have reactions—as many as possible—and the book I sent you is a proof of them. It's, I suppose, because I am that queer monster, the artist, an obstinate finality, an inexhaustible sensibility. Hence the reactions—appearances, memories, many things, go on playing upon it with consequences that I note and “enjoy” (grim word!) noting. It all takes doing—and I *do*. I believe I shall do yet again—it is still an act of life. But you perform them still yourself—and I don't know what keeps me from calling your letter a charming one! There we are, and it's a blessing that you understand—I admit indeed alone—your all-faithful

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. William James.*

“Minnie” is of course Mary Temple, the young cousin of old days commemorated in the last chapter of *Notes of a Son and Brother*.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 29th, 1914.

Dearest Alice,

This is a Saturday a.m., but several days have come and gone since there came to me your dear and beautiful letter of March 14th (considerably about my “Notes,”) and though the American post closes early I must get off some word of recognition to you, however brief I have scramblingly to make it. I hoped of



course you would find in the book something of what I difficultly tried to put there—and you have indeed, you have found all, and I rejoice, because it was in talk with you in that terrible winter of 1910-11 that the impulse to the whole attempt came to me. Glad you will be to know that the thing appears to be quite extraordinarily appreciated, absolutely acclaimed, here—scarcely any difficulties being felt as to “parts that are best,” unless it be that the early passage and the final chapter about dear Minnie seem the great, the beautiful “success” of the whole. What I have been able to do for *her* after all the long years—judged by this test of expressed admiration—strikes me as a wondrous stroke of fate and beneficence of time: I seem really to have (her letters and ———’s and your admirable committal of them to me aiding) made her emerge and live on, endowed her with a kind dim sweet immortality that places and keeps her—and I couldn’t be at all sure that I was doing it; I was so anxious and worried as to my really getting the effect in the right way—with tact and taste and without overstrain. . . .

I am counting the weeks till Peg swims into view again—so delightful will it be to have her near and easily to commune with her, and above all to get from her all that detail of the state of the case about you all that I so constantly yearn for and that only talk can give. The one shade on the picture is my fear that she will find the poor old Uncle much more handicapped about *socially* ministering to them (two young women with large social appetites) than she is perhaps prepared to find me. And yet after all she probably does take in that I have had to cut my connections with society entirely. Complications and efforts with people floor me, angrily, *on the spot*, and my state is that of living

every hour and at every minute on my guard. So I am anything but the centre of an attractive circle—I am cut down to the barest inevitabilities, and occupied really more than in any other way now in simply saving my life. However, the blest child was witness of my condition last summer, my letters have probably sufficiently reflected it since—and I am really on a *better* plane than when she was last with me. To have her with me is a true support and joy, and I somehow feel that with her admirable capacity to be interested in the near and the characteristic, whatever these may be, she will have lots of pleasant and informing experience and contact in spite of my inability to “take her out” or to entertain company for her at home. She knows this and she comes in all her indulgence and charity and generosity—for the sake of the sweet good she can herself do *me*. And I rejoice that she has Margaret P. with her—who will help and solidify and enrich the whole scene. No. 3 will be all satisfactorily ready for them, and I have no real fear but that they will find it a true bower of ease. The omens and auspices seem to me all of the best.

The political atmosphere here is charged to explosion as it has never been—what is to happen no man knows; but this only makes it a more thrilling and spectacular world. The tension has never been so great—but it will, for the time at least, ease down. The dread of violence is shared all round. I am finishing this rather tiredly by night—I couldn’t get it off and have alas missed a post. But all love.

Your affectionate

H. J.

*To Arthur Christopher Benson.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

April 21st, 1914.

My dear Arthur,

What a delightful thing this still more interesting *extension* of our fortunate talk! I can't help being glad that you had second thoughts (though your first affected me as good enough, quite, to need no better ones,) since the result has been your rich and genial letter. The only thing is that if your first thoughts were to torment (or whatever) yourself, these super-sessive rather torment *me*—by their suggestion that there's still more to say yet—than you do say: as when you remark that you ought either to have told me nothing about — or to have told me all. "All" is precisely what I should have liked to have from you—all in fact about everything!—and what a pity we can't appoint another tea-hour for my making up that loss. You clearly live in these years so much more in the current of life than I do that no one of your impressions would have failed of a lively interest for me—and the more we had been able to talk of — and his current, and even of — and his, the more I should have felt your basis of friendship in everything and the generosity of your relation to them. I don't think we see anything, about our friends, unless we see all—so far as in us lies; and there is surely no care we can so take for them as to turn our mind upon them liberally. Don't turn yours too much upon yourself for having done so. The virtue of that "ruder jostle" that you speak of so happily is exactly that it shakes out more aspects and involves more impressions,

and that in fine you young people are together in a way that makes vivid realities spring from it—I having cognisance, in my ancient isolation, I well know, but of the more or less edited, revised, not to say expurgated, creature. It's inevitable—that is—for ancient isolation; but you're in the thick of history and the air of it was all about you, and the records of it in the precious casket that I saw you give in charge to the porter. So with that, oh man of action, perpetually breaking out and bristling with performances and seeing (and feeling) things on the field, I don't know what you mean by the image of the toys given you to play with in a corner—charming as the image is. It's the *corner* I contest—you're in the middle of the market-place, and I alter the figure to that of the brilliant juggler acquitting himself to the admiration of the widest circle amid a whirl of objects projected so fast that they can scarce be recognised, but that as they fly round your head one somehow guesses to be *books*, and one of which in fact now and again hits that of your gaping and dazzled and all-faithful old spectator and friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Humphry Ward.*

The following is one of a large number of letters written in answer to condolences on the subject of the mutilation of his portrait, at this time hanging at the Royal Academy, by a militant "suffragette": who had apparently selected it for attack as being the most notable and valuable canvas in the exhibition.

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
May 6th, 1914.

Dear and Illustrious Friend,

I blush to acknowledge by this rude method the kindness that has expressed itself on your part in your admirable heroic hand. But figure me as a poor thing additionally impaired by the tomahawk of the savage, and then further see me as breasting a wondrous high tide of postal condolence in this doubly-damaged state. I am fairly driven to machinery for expedition's sake. And let me say at once that I gather the sense of the experts to be that my wounds are really curable—such rare secrets for restoration can now be brought to bear! They are to be tried at any rate upon Sargent's admirable work, and I am taking the view that they *must* be effective. As for our discomfort from *ces dames*, that is another affair—and which leaves me much at a loss. Surely indeed the good ladies who claim as a virtue for their sex that they can look an artistic possession of that quality and rarity well in the face only to be moved bloodily to smash it, make a strange appeal to the confidence of the country in the *kind* of character they shall bring to the transaction of our affairs. Valuable to us that species of intelligence! Precious to us that degree of

sensibility ! But I have just made these reflections in very much these terms in a note to dear Anne Ritchie. Postal pressure induces conversational thrift ! However, I do indeed hope to come to see you on Thursday, either a bit early or a bit late, and shall then throw all thrift to the winds and be splendidly extravagant ! I dare say I shall make bold to bring with me my young niece (my brother William's only daughter,) who is spending a couple of months near me here ; and possibly too a young relative of her own who is with her. Till very soon then at the worst.

Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Thomas Sergeant Perry.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
May 17th, 1914.

My dear Thomas,

As usual I groan gratefully under the multiplication of your bounties ; the last of these in particular heaping that measure up. Pardon the use of this form to tell you so : there are times when I faint by the wayside, and can then only scramble to my feet by the aid of the firm secretarial crutch. I fall, physically, physiologically speaking, into holes of no inconsiderable depth, and though experience shows me that I can pretty well always count on scrambling out again, my case while at the bottom is difficult, and it is from such a depth, as happens, that I now address you : not wanting to wait till I *am* above ground again, for my arrears, on those emergencies, are too discouraging to face. Lilla wrote me gentle words on the receipt of the photograph of Sargent's portrait, and now you

have poured upon the wounds it was so deplorably to receive the oil of your compassion and sympathy. I gather up duly and gratefully those rich drops, but even while I stow them away in my best reliquary am able to tell you that, quite extraordinarily, the consummate restorer has been able to make the injuries good, desperate though they at first seemed, and that I am assured (this by Sargent himself) that one would never guess what the canvas has been through. It goes back at once to the Academy to hang upon its nail again, and as soon as it's in place I shall go and sneak a glance at it. I have feared equally till now seeing it either wounded or doctored—that is in course of treatment. Tell Lilla, please, for her interest, that the job will owe its success apparently very much to the newness of the paint, the whole surface more plastic to the manipulator's subtle craft than if it had hardened with time, after the manner of the celebrated old things that are really superior, I think, by their age alone. As I didn't paint the picture myself I feel just as free to admire it inordinately as any other admirer may be; and those are the terms in which I express myself. I won't say, my dear Thomas, much more today. Don't worry about me on any of these counts: I am on a distinctly better footing than this time a year ago, and have worried through upwards of a twelve-month without the convenience, by which I mean the deathly complication, of having to see a Doctor. If I can but go on with that separation there will be hope for me yet. I take you to be now in villeggiatura and preparing for the irruption of your Nursery—which, however, with your vast safe country-side to spread it over won't probably press on you to smotheration. I remember getting the sense

that Hancock would bear much peopling. Plant it here and there with my affectionate thought, ground fine and scattered freely, and believe me yours both all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

The allusions in the following are to a motor-tour of Mrs. Wharton's in Algeria and Tunisia, and to an article by her in the *Times Literary Supplement* on "The Criticism of Fiction."

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 2nd, 1914.

Dearest Edith,

Yes, I have been even to my own sense too long and too hideously silent—small wonder that I should have learned from dear Mary Cadwal therefore (here since Saturday night) that I have seemed to you not less miserably so. Yet there has been all the while a certain sublime inevitability in it—over and above those *general* reactions, in favour of a simplifying and softening *mutisme* that increase with my increasing age and infirmity. I am able to go on only always plus *doucement*, and when you are off on different phases of your great world-swing the mere side-wind of it from afar, across continents and seas, stirs me to wonderments and admirations, sympathies, curiosities, intensities of envy, and eke thereby of *humility*, which I have to check and guard against for their strain on my damaged organism. The *relation* thus escapes me—and I feel it must so escape you, drunk with draughts of every description and immersed in visions which so utterly and inevitably turn their back—or turn yours—on what



one might one's self have de mieux to vous offrir. The idea of tugging at you to make you look round therefore—look round at these small sordidries and poornesses, and thereby lose the very finest flash of the revelation then and there organised for you or (the great thing!) *by* you perchance: that affects me ever as really consonant with no minimum even of modesty or discretion on one's own account—so that, in fine, I have simply lain stretched, a faithful old veteran slave, upon the door-mat of your palace of adventure, sufficiently proud to give the alarm of any irruption, should I catch it, but otherwise waiting till you should emerge again, stepping over my prostrate form to do so. That gracious act now performed by you—since I gather you to be back in Paris by this speaking—I get up, as you see, to wish you the most affectionate and devoted welcome home and tell you that I believe myself to have “kept” in quite a sound and decent way, in the domestic ice-chest of your absence. I mix my metaphors a little, *comme toujours* (or rather *comme jamais*!) but the great thing is to feel you really within hail again and in this air of my own poor little world, which isn't for me the non-conductor (that's the real hitch when you're “off”) of that of your great globe-life. I won't try to ask you of this last glory now—for, though the temperature of the ice-chest itself has naturally risen with your nearer approximation, I still shall keep long enough, I trust, to sit at your knee in some peaceful nook here and gather in the wondrous tale. I have had echoes—even, in very faint and vague form, that of the burglari-ous attempt upon you in the anonymous oriental city (vagueness does possess me!)—but by the time my sound of indignant participation would have reached you I took up my *Lit. Supp.* to

find you in such force over the subject you there treated, on that so happy occasion, that the beautiful firmness and "clarity," even if not charity, of your nerves and tone clearly gave the lie to any fear I should entertain for the effect of your annoyance. I greatly admired by the same token the fine strain of that critical voice from out the path of shade projected upon the desert sand, as I suppose, by the silhouette of your camel. Beautifully said, thought, felt, inimitably *jeté*, the paper has excited great attention and admiration here—and is probably doing an amount of missionary work in savage breasts that we shall yet have some comparatively rude or ingenuous betrayal of. I do notice that the flow of the little *impayables* reviews meanders on—but enfin ne désespérons pas. . . . But oh dear, I want to see you about everything—and am yours all affectionately and not in the least patiently,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William Roughead, W.S.*

This and the next letter refer to further gifts in the literature of crime. Lord Justice Clerk Macqueen of Braxfield was of course the original of Stevenson's Weir of Hermiston.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 10th, 1914

My dear Roughead,

(Let me take a flying leap across the formal barrier!) You are the most munificent of men as well as the most ingenious of writers, and my modest library will have been extremely enriched by you in a department in which it has been weak out of all proportion to the yearning

curiosity of its owner. I greatly appreciate your gift to me of the so complete and pictorial Blandy volume—dreadfully informing as it is in the whole contemporary connection—the documents are such good reporting that they make the manners and the tone, the human and social note, live after a fashion beside which our own general exhibition becomes more soothing to my soul. Your summary of the Blandy trial strikes me afresh as an admirable piece of foreshortening (of the larger quantities—now that these are presented.) But how very good the reporting of cases appears to have been capable of being, all the same, in those pre-shorthand days. I find your Braxfield a fine vivid thing—and the pleasure of sense over the park-like page of the Juridical is a satisfaction by itself; but I confess your hero most interests by the fact that he so interested R. L. S., incurable yearning Scot that Louis was. I am rather easily sated, in the direct way, with the mainly “broad” and monotonously massive characters of that type, uncouth of sound, and with their tendency to be almost stupidly sane. History never does them—never *has*, I think—inadequate justice (you must help her to that blandness here;) and it’s all right and there they numerously and soundly and heavily were and are. But they but renew, ever (when reproduced,) my personal appetite—by reaction—for the handlers of the fiddle-string and the fumlbers for the essence. Such are my more natural sneaking affinities. But keep on with them *all*, please—and continue to beckon me along the gallery that I can’t tread alone and where, by your leave, I link my arm confraternally in yours: the gallery of sinister perspective just stretches in this manner straight away. I am delighted the photograph is to receive such honour—the

original (I don't mean *me*, but Sargent's improvement on me) is really magnificent, and I, unimproved, am yours all truly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William Roughead, W.S.*

Miss Madeleine Hamilton Smith, to whom the following refers, was tried on a charge of poisoning in 1857.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 16th, 1914.

My dear Roughead,

Your offering is a precious thing and I am touched by it, but I am also alarmed for the effect on your fortunes, your future, on those (and that) who (and which) may, as it were, depend on you, of these gorgeous generousities of munificence. The admirable Report is, as I conceive, a high rarity and treasure, and I feel as if in accepting it I were snatching the bread perhaps from the lips of unknown generations. Well, I gratefully bow my head, but only on condition that it shall revert, the important object and alienated heirloom, to the estate of my benefactor on my demise. A strange and fortunate thing has happened—your packet and letter found me this a.m. in the grip of an attack of gout (the first for three or four years, and apparently not destined to be very bad, with an admirable remedy that I possess at once resorted to.) So I have been reclining at peace for most of the day with my foot up and my eyes attached to the prodigious Madeleine. I have read your volume straight through, with the extremity of interest and wonder. It represents indeed the *type*, perfect

case, with nothing to be taken from it or added, and with the beauty that she precisely *didn't* squalidly suffer, but lived on to admire with the rest of us, for so many years, the rare work of art with which she had been the means of enriching humanity. With what complacency must she not have regarded it, through the long backward vista, during the time (now twenty years ago) when I used to hear of her as, married and considered, after a long period in Australia, the near neighbour, in Onslow Gardens, of my old friends the Lyon Playfairs. They didn't know or see her (beyond the fact of her being there,) but they tantalized me, because if it then made me very, very old it now piles Ossa upon Pelion for me that I remember perfectly her trial during its actuality, and how it used to come to us every day in the Times, at Boulogne, where I was then with my parents, and how they followed and discussed it in suspense and how I can still see the queer look of the "not proven," seen for the first time, on the printed page of the newspaper. I stand again with it, on the summer afternoon—a boy of 14—in the open window over the Rue Neuve Chaussée where I read it. Only I didn't know then of its—the case's—perfect beauty and distinction, as you say. A singularly fine thing *is* this report indeed—and a very magnificent the defence. She was truly a portentous young person, with the *conditions* of the whole thing throwing it into such extraordinary relief, and yet I wonder all the same at the verdict in the face of the so vividly attested, and so fully and so horribly, sufferings of her victim. It's astonishing that the evidence of what he went through that last night didn't do for her. And what a pity she was almost of the pre-photographic age—I would give so much for a veracious

portrait of her *then* face. To all of which absolutely inevitable acknowledgment you are not to *dream*, please, of responding by a single word. I shall take, I foresee, the liveliest interest in the literary forger-man. How can we be sufficiently thankful for these charming breaks in the sinister perspective? I rest my telescope on your shoulder and am yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Alfred Sutro.*

“L’Histoire” is George Sand’s *Histoire de ma Vie*, sent by H. J. to Mrs. Sutro in preparation for her proposed visit to Nohant.

Lamb House, Rye.

July 28th, 1914.

Dear Mrs. Sutro,

I rejoice to hear, by your liberal letter, that the pile of books held together and have appeared, on reaching you, to make a decent show. Also I’m very glad that it’s come in your way to have a look at Nohant—though I confess that I ask myself what effect the *vulgarization* of places, “scientifically” speaking, by free and easy (and incessant) motor approach may be having on their once comparatively sequestered genius. Well, that is exactly what you will tell me after you have constaté the phenomenon in this almost best of all cases for observing it. For Nohant *was* so shy and remote—and Nohant must be now (handed over to the State and the Public as their property) so very much to the fore. *Do* read L’Histoire at any rate first—that is indispensable, and the *lecture* of a facility! Yes, I am liking it very much here in these beautiful midsummer coolnesses—though wishing *we* weren’t so losing our Bloom of mystery by the multitudinous

assault. However, I hug whatever provincial privacy we may still pretend to at this hour of public uproar—so very horrible is the bear-garden of the outer world to my sense, under these threatened convulsions. I cravenly avert my eyes and stop my ears—scarcely turning round even for a look at the Caillaux family. What a family and what a trial—and what a suggestion, for *us*, of complacent self-comparisons! I clutch at these hungrily—in the great deficiency of other sources of any sort of assurance for us. May we muddle through even now, though I almost wonder if we deserve to! That doubt is why I bury my nose in my rose-trees and my inkpot. What a judge of the play you will be becoming, with the rate at which Alfred and his typist keep you supplied! Be sure to see the little Nohant domestic theatre, by the way—and judge what a part *it* played in that uncomfortable house. I long for the autumn “run” when you will tell me all your impressions, and am yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Sir Claude Phillips.*

Lamb House, Rye.

July 31st, 1914.

My dear Claude,

I can't not thank you on the spot for your so interesting and moving letter, which reflects to me, relievingly in a manner, all the horror and dismay in which I sit here alone. I mean that it eases off the appalled sense a little to share that sickness with a fellow-victim and be able to say a little of what presses on one. What one first feels one's self uttering, no doubt, is but the intense unthinkability of anything so blank and so infamous in an age

that we have been living in and taking for our own as if it were of a high refinement of civilisation—in spite of all conscious incongruities; finding it after all carrying this abomination in its blood, finding this to have been what it *meant* all the while, is like suddenly having to recognise in one's family circle or group of best friends a band of murderers, swindlers and villains—it's just a similar shock. It makes us wonder whom in the world we are now to live with then—and even if with everything publicly and internationally so given away we can live, or want to live, at all. Very hideous to me is the behaviour of that forsworn old pastor of his people, the Austrian Emperor, of whom, so éprouvé and so venerable, one had supposed better things than so interested and so cynical a chucking to the winds of all moral responsibility. Infamous seem to me in such a light all the *active* great ones of the earth, active for evil, in our time (to speak only of that,) from the monstrous Bismarck down! But il s'agit bien to protest in face of such a world—one can only possess one's soul in such dignity as may be precariously achievable. Almost the worst thing is that the dreadfulness, all of it, *may* become interesting—to the blight and ruin of our poor dear old cherished source of interest, and in spite of one's resentment at having to live in such a way. With it all too is indeed the terrible sense that the people of this country may well—by some awful brutal justice—be going to get something bad for the exhibition that has gone on so long of their huge materialized stupidity and vulgarity. I mean the enormous national sacrifice to insensate amusement, without a redeeming idea or a generous passion, that has kept making one ask one's self, from so far back, how such grossness and



folly and blatancy could possibly *not* be in the long run to be paid for. The rate at which we may witness the paying may be prodigious—and then no doubt one will pityingly and wretchedly feel that the *intention*, after all, was never so bad—only the stupidity constitutional and fatal. That is truly the dismal reflection, and on which you touch, that if anything very bad does happen to the country, there isn't anything like the French intelligence to react—with the flannelled fool at the wicket, the muddled oaf and tutti quanti, representing so much of our *preferred* intelligence. However, let me pull up with the thought that when I am reduced to—or have come to—quoting Kipling for argument, there may be something the matter with my conclusion. One can but so distressfully wait and so wonderingly watch.

I am sorry to hear that the great London revelry and devilry (even if you have had more of the side-wind than of the current itself) has left you so consciously spent and sore. You can do with so much *more* of the current, at any rate, than I have ever been able to, that it affects me as sad and wrong that that of itself shouldn't be something of a guarantee. But if there must be more drawing together perhaps we shall blessedly find that we can all more help each other. I quite see your point in taking either the grand or the petty tour just now not at all for granted, and greatly hope that if you circulate in this country some fitful tide will bear you to this quarter—though I confess that when I think of the *comparative* public entertainment on which you would so have to throw yourself I blush to beckon you on. I find myself quite offensively complacent in the conditions about the established simplicity of my own life—I've not “done” anything for so long, and have

been given over to such spareness and bareness, that I look privation in the face as a very familiar friend.

Yours all faithfully and fearfully,

HENRY JAMES.

## VIII

### THE WAR

(1914-1916)

THE letters that follow tell the story of Henry James's life during the first year of the war in words that make all others superfluous. The tide of emotion on which he was lifted up and carried forward was such as he only could describe; and week by week, in scores of letters to friends in England and France and America, he uttered himself on behalf of those who felt as he did, but who had no language worthy of the time. To all who listened to him in those days it must have seemed that he gave us what we lacked—a voice; there was a trumpet note in it that was heard nowhere else and that alone rose to the height of the truth. For a while it was as though the burden of age had slipped from him; he lived in the lives of all who were acting and suffering—especially of the young, who acted and suffered most. His spiritual vigour bore a strain that was the greater by the whole weight of his towering imagination; but the time came at last when his bodily endurance failed. He died resolutely confident of the victory that was still so far off.

He was at Rye when the war broke out, but he very soon found the peace of the country intolerable. He came to London, to be within the current of events, and remained there almost

uninterruptedly till the end. His days were filled with many interests, chief of which was the opportunity of talk with wounded soldiers—in hospital, at the houses of friends, in the streets as he walked; wherever he met them the sight irresistibly drew forth his sympathy and understanding and admiration. Close at hand, in Chelsea, there was a centre for the entertainment of refugees from Belgium, and for these he was active in charity. Another cause in which he was much engaged, and to which he contributed help of more kinds than one, was that of the American Volunteer Motor-Ambulance corps in France, organised by the son of his old friend Charles Eliot Norton. Every contact with the meaning of war, which no hour could fail to bring, gave an almost overpowering surge of impressions, some of which passed into a series of essays, written for different charitable purposes and now collected in *Within the Rim* (1919). Even beyond all this he was able to give a certain amount of energy to other literary work; and indeed he found it essential to cling so far as might be to the steadying continuity of creation. The Ivory Tower had to be laid aside—it was impossible to believe any longer in a modern fiction, supposed to represent the life of the day, which the great catastrophe had so belied; but he took up *The Sense of the Past* again, the fantasmal story he had abandoned for its difficulty in 1900—finding its unreality now remote enough to be beyond the reach of the war. He also began a third volume of reminiscences, *The Middle Years*. Work of one kind or another was pushed forward with increasing effort through the summer of 1915, the last of his writing being the introduction to the *Letters from America* of Rupert Brooke. He

finished this, and spent the eve of his last illness, December 1st, in turning over the pages of *The Sense of the Past*, intending to go on with it the next morning. X

Meanwhile, as everyone knows, his passionate loyalty to the cause of the Allies had brought him to take a step which in all but forty years of life in England he had never before contemplated. On July 26th, 1915, he became naturalised as a British subject. The letters now published give the fullest expression to his motives; it has seemed right to let them do so, mingled as his motives were with many strains, some of them reactions of disappointment over the official attitude of his native country at that time. If he had lived to see America join the Allies he would have had the deepest joy of his life; and perhaps it is worth mentioning that his relations with the American Embassy in London had never been so close and friendly as they became during those last months.

On the morning of December 2nd he had a stroke, presently followed by another, from which he rallied at first, but which bore him down after not many days. His sister-in-law, with her eldest son and daughter, came at once from America to be with him, and he was able to enjoy their company. He was pleased, too, by a sign of welcome offered to him in his new citizenship. Among the New Year honours there was announced the award to him of the Order of Merit, and the insignia were brought to his bedside by Lord Bryce, a friend of many years. Through the following weeks he gradually sank; he died on February 28th, 1916, within two months of his seventy-third birthday. His body was cremated, and the funeral service held at Chelsea Old Church on March 3rd, a few yards from his own door on the quiet river-side.

*To Howard Sturgis.*

Lamb House, Rye.

[August 4th, 1914.]

Dearly beloved Howard !

I think one of the reasons is that I have so allowed silence and separation to *accumulate*—the effort of breaking through the mass becomes in that case so formidable; the mass being thus the monstrous mountain that blocks up the fair scene and that one has to explain away. I am engaged in that effort at the present moment, however—I *am* breaking through the mass, boring through the mountain, I feel, as I put pen to paper—and this, too, though I don't, though I shan't, though I can't particularly "explain." And why *should* I treat you at this time of day—or, to speak literally, of night—as if you had begun suddenly not to be able to understand without a vulgar demonstration on the blackboard? As I should never dream of resorting to that mode of public proof that I tenderly and unabatedly love you, so why should I think it necessary to chalk it up there that there was, all those strange weeks and months during which I made you no sign, an absolute *inevitability* in the graceless appearance? I call them strange because of the unnatural face that they wear to me now—but they had at the time the deadliest familiar look; the look of all the other parts of life that

one was giving up and doing without—even if it didn't resemble them in their comparative dismissability. From them I learned perforce at last to avert my head, whereas there wasn't a moment of the long stretch during which I never either wrote or wired you for generous leave to come down to tea or dinner or both, there wasn't a moment when I hadn't, from Chelsea to Windsor, my eyes fondly fixed on you. You seemed rather to go out of their reach when I was placed in some pretended assurance that you had left Qu'acre for Scotland, but now that I hear, by some equally vague voice of the air, that you are still at home—and this appears more confirmed to me—I have you intensely before me again; yes, and so vividly that I even make you out as sometimes looking at *me*. I think in fact it's a good deal the magnanimous sadness I so catch from you that makes me feel to-night how little longer I can bear my own black air of having fallen away while I yet really and intensely stick, and therefore get on the way to you again, so far as this will take me.

It will soon be three weeks since I came back here from Chelsea—which I was capable of leaving, yes, without having made you a sign. It was a case, dearest Howard, of the essential inevitability—the mark you yourself must in these days so recognise in all your omissions and frustrations, all your lapses from the mortal *act*. Even you must have to know them so on your own part—and you must feel them just to *have* to be as they are (and as you are.) That was the way the like things had to be with me—as *I* was; and it's to insult our long and perfect understanding not to feel that you have treasures of the truest interpretation of everything whatever in our common condition. Oh how I so

want at last, all the same, to have a direct word or two from your blest self on your own share of that community! I have questioned whomsoever I could in any faint degree suppose worth questioning on this score of the *show* you are making—but of course, I admit, elicited no word of any real value. Five words of your own articulation—by which I mean scratches of your own pen—will go further with me than any amount of roundabout twaddle. I hear of predatory loose women quartered upon you again—and I groan in my far-off pain; especially when I reflect that *their* fatuous account would be that you were in health and joy quite exactly by reason of them. I think the great public blackness most of all makes me send out this signal to you—as if I were lighting the twinkle of a taper to set over against you in my window.

*August 5th.* The taper went out last night, and I am afraid I now kindle it again to a very feeble ray—for it's vain to try to talk as if one weren't living in a nightmare of the deepest dye. How can what is going on not be to one as a huge horror of blackness? Of course that is what it is to you, dearest Howard, even as it is to your infinitely sickened inditer of these lines. The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness by the wanton feat of those two infamous autocrats is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and *meaning* is too tragic for any words. But one's reflections don't really bear being uttered—at least we each make them enough for our individual selves and I didn't mean to smother you under mine in addition to your own. . . .



But good-night again—my lamp now is snuffed out. Have I mentioned to you that I am not here alone?—having with me my niece Peggy and her younger brother—both “caught” for the time, in a manner; though willing, even glad, as well as able, to bear their poor old appalled Uncle the kindest company—very much the same sort as William bears you. I embrace you, and him too, and am ever your faithfullest old

H. J.

*To Henry James, junior.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye,  
August 6th, 1914.

Dearest Harry,

. . . Everything is of the last abnormalism now, and no convulsion, no historic event of any such immensity can ever have taken place in such a turn-over of a few hours and with such a measureless rush—the whole thing being, in other words, such an unprecedented combination of size and suddenness. There has never surely, since the world began, been any suddenness so big, so instantly mobilised, any more than there has been an equal enormity so sudden (if, after all, that *can* be called sudden, or more than comparatively so, which, it is now clearly visible, had been brewing in the councils of the two awful Kaisers from a good while back.) The entrance of this country into the fray has been supremely inevitable—never doubt for an instant of that; up to a few short days ago she was still multiplying herself over Europe, in the magnificent energy and pertinacity of Edward Grey, for peace,

and nothing but peace, in any way in which he could by any effort or any service help to preserve it; and has now only been beaten by what one can only call the huge immorality, the deep conspiracy for violence, for violence and wrong, of the Austrian and the German Emperors. Till the solemnly guaranteed neutrality of Belgium was three or four days ago deliberately violated by Germany, in defiance of every right, in her ferocious push to get at France by that least fortified way, we still hung in the balance here; but with that no "balance" was any longer possible, and the impulse to participate to the utmost in resistance and redress became as unanimous and as sweeping a thing in the House of Commons and throughout the land as it is possible to conceive. That is the one light, as one may call it, in so much sickening blackness—that in an hour, here, all breaches instantly healed, all divisions dropped, the Irish dissension, on which Germany had so clearly counted, dried up in a night—so that there is at once the most striking and interesting spectacle of united purpose. For myself, I draw a long breath that we are not to have failed France or shirked any shadow of a single one of the *implications* of the Entente; for the reason that we go in only under the last compulsion, and with cleaner hands than we have ever had, I think, in any such matter since such matters were. (You see how I talk of "we" and "our"—which is so absolutely instinctive and irresistible with me that I should feel quite abject if I didn't!) However I don't want, for today, to disquisitionise on this great public trouble, but only to give you our personal news in the midst of it—for it's astonishing in how few days we have jumped into the sense of *being* in the midst of it. England and the

Continent are at the present hour full of hung-up and stranded Americans—those unable to get home and waiting for some re-establishment of violently interrupted traffic. . . . But good-bye, dearest Harry, now. It's a great blessing to be able to write you under this aid to lucidity—it's in fact everything, so I shall keep at it. I hope the American receipt of news is getting organised on the strong and sound lines it should be. Send this, of course, please, as soon as you can to your Mother and believe me your devotedest old Uncle,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Alfred Sutro.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
August 8th, 1914.

Dear Mrs. Sutro,

I have your good letter, but how impossible it seems to speak of anything *before* one speaks of the tremendous public matter—and then how impossible to speak of anything *after*! But here goes for poor dear old George Sand and her ancient prattle (heaven forgive me!) to the extent that of course that autobiography (it *is* a nice old set!) does in a manner notify one that it's going to be frank and copious, veracious and vivid, only during all its earlier part and in respect to the non-intimate things of the later prime of its author, and to stand off as soon as her personal plot began to thicken. You see it was a book written in middle life, not in old age, and the "thick" things, the thickest, of her remarkable past were still then very close behind her. But as an autobiography of the beginnings and earlier maturities

of life it's indeed finer and jollier than anything there is.

Yes, how your loss, for the present, of Nohant is swept away on the awful tide of the Great Interruption! This last is as mild a name for the hideous matter as one can consent to give—and I confess I live under the blackness of it as under a funeral pall of our murdered civilization. I say “for the present” about Nohant, and you, being young and buoyant, will doubtless pick up lost opportunities in some incalculable future; but that time looks to me as the past already looks—I mean the recent past of happy motor-runs, on May and June afternoons, down to the St. Alban's and the Witleys: disconnected and fabulous, fatuous, fantastic, belonging to another life and another planet. I find it such a mistake on my own part to have lived on—when, like other saner and safer persons, I might perfectly have not—into this unspeakable giveaway of the whole fool's paradise of our past. It throws back so livid a light—*this* was what we were so fondly working for! My aged nerves can scarcely stand it, and I bear up but as I can. I dip my nose, or try to, into the inkpot as often as I can; but it's as if there were no ink there, and I take it out smelling gunpowder, smelling blood, as hard as it did before. And yet I keep at it—or mean to; for (tell Alfred for his own encouragement—and pretty a one as I am to encourage!) that I hold we can still, he and I, *make* a little civilization, the inkpot aiding, even when vast chunks of it, around us, go down into the abyss—and that the preservation of it depends upon our going on making it in spite of everything and sitting tight and not chucking up—wherefore, after all, *vive* the old delusion and fill again the flowing stylograph—for I am sure Alfred writes with one. . . .

The afternoons and the aspects here are most incongruously lovely—and so must be yours. But it's goodnight now, and I am most truly yours, dear Mrs. Sutro,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Rhoda Broughton.*

Lamb House, Rye.

August 10th, 1914.

Dearest Rhoda!

It is not a figure of speech but an absolute truth that even if I had not received your very welcome and sympathetic script I should be writing to you this day. I have been on the very edge of it for the last week—so had my desire to make you a sign of remembrance and participation come to a head; and verily I must—or may—almost claim that this all but “crosses” with your own. The only blot on our unanimity is that it's such an unanimity of woe. Black and hideous to me is the tragedy that gathers, and I'm sick beyond cure to have lived on to see it. You and I, the ornaments of our generation, should have been spared this wreck of our belief that through the long years we had seen civilization grow and the worst become impossible. The tide that bore us along was then all the while moving to *this* as its grand Niagara—yet what a blessing we didn't know it. It seems to me to *undo* everything, everything that was ours, in the most horrible retroactive way—but I avert my face from the monstrous scene!—you can hate it and blush for it without my help; we can each do enough of that by ourselves. The country and the season here are of a beauty of peace, and loveliness of light, and summer grace, that make it

inconceivable that just across the Channel, blue as *paint* today, the fields of France and Belgium are being, or about to be, given up to unthinkable massacre and misery. One is ashamed to admire, to enjoy, to take any of the normal pleasure, and the huge shining indifference of Nature strikes a chill to the heart and makes me wonder of what abysmal mystery, or villainy indeed, such a cruel smile is the expression. In the midst of it all at any rate we walked, this strange Sunday afternoon (9th), my niece Peggy, her youngest brother and I, about a mile out, across the blessed grass mostly, to see and have tea with a genial old Irish friend (Lady Mathew, who has a house here for the summer,) and came away an hour later bearing with us a substantial green volume, by an admirable eminent hand, which our hostess had just read with such a glow of satisfaction that she overflowed into easy lending. I congratulate you on having securely put it forth before this great distraction was upon us—for I am utterly pulled up in the midst of a rival effort by finding that my job won't at all consent to be done in the face of it. The picture of little private adventures simply fades away before the great public. I take great comfort in the presence of my two young companions, and above all in having caught my nephew by the coat-tail only *just* as he was blandly starting for the continent on Aug. 1st. Poor Margaret Payson is trapped somewhere in France—she *having* then started, though not for Germany, blessedly; and we remain wholly without news of her. Peggy and Aleck have four or five near maternal relatives lost in Germany—though as Americans they may fare a little less dreadfully there than if they were English. And I have numerous friends—we all have, haven't we?—inaccessible

and unimaginable there; it's becoming an anguish to think of them. Nevertheless I do believe that we shall be again gathered into a blessed little Chelsea drawing-room—it will be like the reopening of the salons, so irrepressibly, after the French revolution. So only sit tight, and invoke your heroic soul, dear Rhoda, and believe me more than ever all-faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Lamb House, Rye.

August 19th, 1914.

Dearest Edith,

Your letter of the 15th has come—and may this reach you as directly, though it probably won't. No, I won't make it long—the less that the irrelevance of all remark, the utter extinction of everything, in the face of these immensities, leaves me as “all silent and all damned” as you express that it leaves *you*. I find it the strangest state to have lived on and on for—and yet, with its wholesale annihilation, it *is* somehow life. Mary Cadwal is admirably here—interesting and vivid and helpful to the last degree, and Bessie Lodge and her boy had the heavenly beauty, this afternoon, to come down from town (by train s'entend) rien que for tea—she even sneakingly went first to the inn for luncheon—and was off again by 5.30, nobly kind and beautiful and good. (She sails in the Olympic with her aunt on Saturday.) Mary C. gives me a sense of the interest of your Paris which makes me understand how it must attach you—how it would attach me in your place. Infinitely thrilling and touching such a community with the so

all-round incomparable nation. I feel on my side an immense community here, where the tension is proportionate to the degree to which we feel engaged—in other words up to the chin, up to the eyes, if necessary. Life goes on after a fashion, but I find it a nightmare from which there is no waking save by sleep. I *go* to sleep, as if I were dog-tired with action—yet feel like the chilled *vieillards* in the old epics, infirm and helpless at home with the women, while the plains are ringing with battle. The season here is monotonously magnificent—and we look inconceivably off across the blue channel, the lovely rim, toward the nearness of the horrors that are in perpetration just beyond. . . . I manage myself to try to “work”—even if I *had*, after experiment, to give up trying to make certain little *fantoques* and their private adventure *tenir debout*. *They* are laid by on the shelf—the private adventure so utterly blighted by the public; but I have got hold of something else, and I find the effort of concentration to some extent an antidote. Apropos of which I thank you immensely for D’Annunzio’s frenchified ode—a wondrous and magnificent thing in its kind, even if running too much—for my “taste”—to the vituperative and the execrational. The Latin Renaissance mustn’t be too much for and by *that*—for which its facile resources are so great. . . . What’s magnificent to me in the French themselves at this moment is their lapse of expression. . . . May this not fail of you! I am your all-faithfully tender and true old

H. J.



*To Mrs. W. K. Clifford.*

Lamb House, Rye.

August 22nd, 1914.

Dearest Lucy,

I have, I know, been quite portentously silent—your brief card of distress to-night (Saturday p.m.—) makes me feel it—but you on your side will also have felt the inevitability of this absence of mere vain and vague remark in the presence of such prodigious realities. My overwhelmed sense of them has simply left me nothing to say—the rupture with all the blest old proportion of things has been so complete and utter, and I've felt as if most of my friends (from very few of whom I have heard at all) were so wrapped in gravities and dignities of silence that it wasn't fair to write to them simply to make *them* write. And so it has gone—the whole thing defying expression so that one has just stared at the horror and watched it grow. But I am not writing now, dearest old friend, to express either alarm or despair—and this mainly by reason of there being so high a decency in *not* doing so. I hate not to possess my soul—and oh I should like, while I am *about* that, to possess yours for you too. One doesn't possess one's soul unless one squares oneself a good deal, in fact very hard indeed, for the purpose; but in proportion as one succeeds that means preparation, and preparation means confidence, and confidence means force, and that is as far as we need go for the moment. Your few words express a bad apprehension which I don't share—and which even our straight outlook here over the blue channel of all these amazing days, toward the unthinkable horrors of its almost other edge, doesn't *make* me share.

I don't in the least believe that the Germans will be "here"—with us generally—because I don't believe—I don't admit—that anything so abject as the allowance of it by our overwhelming Fleet, in conditions making it so tremendously difficult for them (the G.'s), is in the least conceivable. Things are not going to be so easy for them as that—however uneasy they may be for ourselves. I *insist* on a great confidence—I cultivate it as resolutely as I can, and if we were only nearer together I think I should be able to help you to some of the benefit of it. I have been very thankful to be on this spot all these days—I mean in this sympathetic little old house, which has somehow assuaged in a manner the nightmare. One invents *arts* for assuaging it—of which some work better than others. The great sore sense I find the futility of talk—*about* the cataclysm: this is so impossible that I can really almost talk about other things! . . . I am supposing you see a goodish many people—since one hears that there are so many in town, and I am glad for you of that: solitude in these conditions being grim, even if society is bleak! I try to read and I rather succeed, and also even to write, and find the effort of it greatly pays. Lift up your heart, dearest friend—I believe we shall meet to embrace and look back and tell each other how appallingly interesting the whole thing "was." I gather in all of you right affectionately and am yours, in particular, dearest Lucy, so stoutly and tenderly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To William James, junior.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
August 31st, 1914.

Dearest Bill,

Very blest to me this morning, and very blest to Peggy and Aleck and me, your momentous and delightful cable. I don't know that we are either of us much versed in the weight of babies, but we have strong and, I find, unanimous views about their sex, which your little adventurer into this world of woe has been so good as gracefully to meet. We are all three thoroughly glad of the nephew in him, if only because of being glad of the little brother. We are convinced that that's the way his parents feel, and I hope the feeling is so happy a one for Alice as to be doing her all sorts of good. Admirable the "all well" of your cable: may it go straight on toward better and better. . . .

Our joy in your good news is the only gleam of anything of the sort with which we have been for a long time visited; as an admirable letter from you to Aleck, which he read me last night, seemed to indicate (more than anything we have yet had from home) some definite impression of. Yes indeed, we are steeped in the very air of anxieties and horrors—and they all seem, where we are situated, so little far away. I have written two or three times to Harry, and also to your Mother, since leaving London, and Peggy and Aleck in particular have had liberal responses from each. But those received up to now rather suggest a failure quite to grasp the big black realities of the whole case roundabout us far and near. The

War blocks out of course—for that you have realised—every other object and question, every other thinkability, in life; and I needn't tell you what a strain it all is on the nerves and the faith of a poor old damaged septuagenarian uncle. The extraordinary thing is the way that every interest and every connection that seemed still to exist up to exactly a month ago has been as annihilated as if it had never lifted a head in the world at all. . . . That isn't, with reflection, so far as one can "calmly" reflect, *all* that I see; on the contrary there is a way of looking at what is taking place that is positively helpful, or almost, when one can concentrate on it at all—which is difficult. I mean the view that the old systematic organisation and consecration of such forces as are now let loose, of their unspeakable infamy and insanity, is undergoing such a triumphant exhibition in respect to the loathsomeness and madness of the same, that it is what we must all together be most face to face with when the actual blackness of the smoke shall have cleared away. But I can't go into that now, any more than I can make this letter long, dearest Bill and dearest Alice, or can say anything just now in particular reference to what is happening. . . . You get in Boston probably about as much news as we do, for this is enormously, and quite justly, under control of the authorities, and nothing reaches us but what is in the interest of operations, precautions, every kind of public disposition and consideration, for the day and hour. This country is making an enormous effort—so far as its Fleet is concerned a triumphantly powerful and successful one; and there is a great deal more of the effort to come. Roughly speaking, Germany, immensely prepared and with the biggest fighting-power ever known on earth, has staked her all on a colossal

onslaught, and yet is far even yet from having done with it what she believed she would in the time, or on having done it *as* she first designed. The horrors of the crucifixion of Belgium, the general atrocity of the Kaiser's methods, haven't even yet entirely availed, and there are chances not inconsiderable, even while I write, that they won't entirely avail; that is that certain things may still happen to prevent them. But it is all for the moment tremendously dark and awful. We kind of huddle together here and try to lead our lives in such small dignity and piety as we may. . . . More and more is it a big fact in the colossal public situation that Germany is absolutely locked up at last in a maritime way, with all the seas swept of her every vessel of commerce. She appears now absolutely corked, her commerce and communications dead as a doornail, and the British activity in undisturbed possession of the seas. This by itself is an enormous service, an immeasurable and finally determinant one, surely, rendered by this country to the Allies. But after hanging over dearest Alice ever so blessingly again, and tickling the new little infant phenomenon with a now quite practised old affectionate nose, I must pull off and be just, dearest Bill, your own all-fondest old Uncle,

H. J.

To Mrs. W. K. Clifford.

Dictated.

Lamb House, Rye.

August 31st, 1914.

Dearest L. C.,

I am reduced again, you see, to this aid to correspondence, which I feel myself indeed fortunate to possess, under the great oppression of the atmosphere in which we live. It makes recuperation doubly difficult in case of recurrence of old ailments, and I have been several days in bed with a renewed kick of the virus of my dismal long illness of 1910-11 and am on my feet to-day for the first time. Fortunately I know better how to deal with it now, and with a little time I come round. But it leaves me heavy-fingered. One is heavy-everything, for that matter, amid these horrors—over which I won't and can't expatiate, and hang and pore. That way madness lies, and one must try to economise, and not disseminate, one's forces of resistance—to the prodigious public total of which I think we can each of us, in his or her own way, individually, and however obscurely, contribute. To this end, very kindly, *don't send me on newspapers*—I very particularly beseech you; it seems so to suggest that you imagine us living in privation of, or indifference to them: which is somehow such a sorry image. We are drenched with them and live up to our neck in them: *all* the London morning ones by 8 a.m., and every scrap of an evening one by about 6.40 p.m. We see the former thus at exactly the same hour we should in town, and the last forms in which the latter appear very little more belatedly. They are not just now very exhilarating—but I can only take things

in in waiting silence—bracing myself unutterably, and holding on somehow (though to God knows what!) in presence of perpetrations so gratuitously and infamously hideous as the destruction of Louvain and its accompaniments, for which I can't believe there won't be a tremendous day of reckoning. Frederic Harrison's letter in to-day's "Times" will have been as much a relief to my nerves and yours, and to those of millions of others, as to his own splendidly fine old inflamed ones; meaning by nerves everything that shall most formidably clamour within us for the recorded execration of history. I find this more or less helpless assisting at the so long-drawn-out martyrdom of the admirable little Belgium the very intensest part of one's anguish, and my one support in it is to lose myself in dreams and visions of what must be done eventually, with *real* imagination and magnanimity, and above all with *real* material generosity, to help her unimaginable lacerations to heal. The same inscrutable irony of ethereal peace and serenity goes on shedding itself here from the face of nature, who has "turned out" for us such a summer of blandness and beauty as would have been worthy of a better cause. It still goes on, though of course we should be glad of more rain; but occasional downfalls even of that heavenly dew haven't quite failed us, and more of it will very presumably now come. There is no one here in particular for me to tell you of, and if it weren't that Peggy is with me I should be pretty high and dry in the matter of human converse and contact. She intensely prefers to remain with me for the present—and if she *should* have to leave I think I on my side should soon after have to return to my London perch; finding as I do that almost absolute solitude under the assault of all the horrors

isn't at all a good thing for me. However, that is not a practical question yet. . . . I think of you all faithfully and fondly.

Ever your old devotedest

H. J.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

This moment was that of the height of the "Russian legend," and like everyone else H. J. was eagerly welcoming the multitudinous evidence of the passage of a vast Russian army through England to France.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

September 1st, 1914.

Dear E. W.,

Cast your intelligent eye on the picture from this a.m.'s Daily Mail that I send you and which you may not otherwise happen to see. Let it rest, with all its fine analytic power, on the types, the dress, the caps and the boots of the so-called Belgians disembarked—disembarked from *where, juste ciel!*—at Ostend, and be struck as I have been as soon as the thing was shown to me this a.m. by the notice-taking Skinner (my brave Dr.) so much more notice-taking than so many of the persons around us. If they are not straight out of the historic, or even fictive, page of Tolstoy, I will eat the biggest pair of moujik boots in the collection! With which Skinner told me of speech either this morning or last evening, on his part, with a man whose friend or brother, I forget which, had just written him from Sheffield: "Train after train of Russians have been passing through here to-day (Sunday); they *are* a rum-looking lot!" But an enormous quantity of this apparently corroborative testimony from *seen trains*, with



their contents stared at and wondered at, has within two or three days kept coming in from various quarters. *Quantum valeat!* I consider the reproduced snap-shot enclosed, however, a regular gem of evidence. What a blessing, after all, is our—*our*—refined visual sense!

This isn't really by way of answer to your own most valuable letter this morning received—but that is none the less gratefully noted, and shall have its independent acknowledgment. I am better, thank you, distinctly; the recovery of power to eat again means everything to me. I greatly appreciated your kind little letter to my most interesting and admirable Peggy, whom you left under the charm.

My own small domestic plot here rocks beneath my feet, since yesterday afternoon, with the decision at once to volunteer of my invaluable and irreplaceable little Burgess! I had been much expecting and even hoping for it, but definitely shrinking from the responsibility of administering the push with my own hand: I wanted the impulse to play up of itself. It now appears that it had played up from the first, inwardly—with the departure of the little Rye contingent for Dover a fortnight ago. The awfully decent little chap had then felt the pang of patriotism and martial ardour *rentrés*; and had kept silent for fear of too much incommoding me by doing otherwise. But now the clearance has taken place in the best way in the world, and I part with him in a day or two.

. . . This is all now save that I am always yours too much for typists,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Richard Watson Gilder.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

September 2nd, 1914.

My dear Helena,

... We are passing here, as you may well suppose, through the regular fiery furnace, the sharpest ordeal and the most tremendous, even on these shores, that the generations have been through since any keeping of accounts, and yet mild, as one keeps reminding oneself, in comparison with the lacerations of France and the martyrdoms of Belgium. It leaves one small freedom of mind for general talk, it presses, all the while, with every throb of consciousness; and if during the first days I felt in the air the recall of our Civil War shocks and anxieties, and hurryings and doings, of 1861, etc., the pressure in question has already become a much nearer and bigger thing, and a more formidable and tragic one, than anything we of the North in those years had to face. It lights up for me rather what the tension was, what it must have been, in the South—though with difference even in that correspondence. The South was more destitute than these rich countries are likely even at the worst to find themselves, but on the other hand the German hordes, to speak only of them, are immeasurably more formidable and merciless than our comparatively benign Northern armies ever approached being. However, I didn't mean to go into these historical parallels—any more than I feel able, dear Helena, to go into many points of any kind. One of the effects of this colossal convulsion is that all connection with everything of every kind that has gone before

seems to have broken short off in a night, and nothing ever to have happened of the least consequence or relevance, beside what is happening now. Therefore when you express to me so beautifully and touchingly your interest in my "Notes" of—another life and planet, as one now can but feel, I have to make an enormous effort to hitch the allusion to my present consciousness. I knew you would enter deeply into the chapter about Minnie Temple, and had your young, your younger intimacy with her at the back of my consciousness even while I wrote. I had in mind a small, a very small, number of persons who would be peculiarly reached by what I was doing and would really know what I was talking about, as the mass of others couldn't, and you were of course in that distinguished little group. I could but leave you to be as deeply moved as I was sure you would be, and surely I can but be glad to have given you the occasion. I remember your telling me long ago that you were not allowed during that last year to have access to her; but I myself, for most of it, was still further away, and yet the vividness of her while it went on seems none the less to have been preserved for us all alike, only waiting for a right pressure of the spring to bring it out. What is most pathetic in the light of to-day has seemed to me the so tragically little real care she got, the little there was real knowledge enough, or presence of mind enough, to do for her, so that she was probably sacrificed in a degree and a way that would be impossible to-day. I thank you at any rate for letting me know that you have, as you say, relievingly wept. For the rest your New England summer life, amid your abounding hills and woods and waters, to say nothing of the more intimate strong savour your children must impart to it,

shines upon me here, from far across the sea, as a land of brighter dream than it's easy to think of mankind anywhere as dreaming. I am delighted to hear that these things are thus comfortable and auspicious with you. The interest of your work on Richard's Life wouldn't be interesting to you if it were not tormenting, and wouldn't be tormenting if it were not so considerably worth doing. But, as I say, one sees everything without exception that has been a part of past history through the annihilation of battle smoke if of nothing else, and all questions, again, swoon away into the obscure. If you have got something to do, stick to it tight, and do it with faith and force; some things will, no doubt, eventually be redeemed. I don't speak of the actualities of the public situation here at this moment—because I can't say things in the air about them. But this country is making the most enormous, the most invaluable, and the most inspired effort she has ever had to put her hand to, and though the devastating Huns are thundering but just across the Channel—which looks so strangely serene in a present magnificence of summer—she won't have failed, I am convinced, of a prodigious saving achievement.

Yours, my dear Helena, all affectionately,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

It should be mentioned that Mrs. Wharton had come to England, but was planning an early return to Paris.

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.  
September 3rd, 1914.

My dear E. W.,

It's a great luxury to be able to go on in this way. I wired you at once this morning how very glad indeed I shall be to take over your superfluous young man as a substitute for Burgess, if he will come in the regular way, as *my* servant entirely, not borrowed from you (otherwise than in the sense of his going back to you whenever you shall want him again;) and remaining with me on a wage basis settled by me with him, and about the same as Burgess's, if possible, so long as the latter is away. . . .

I am afraid indeed now, after this lapse of days, that the "Russian" legend doesn't very particularly hold water—some information I have this morning in the way of a positive denial of the War Office points that way, unless the sharp denial is conceivable *quand même*. The only thing is that there remains an extraordinary residuum of fact to be accounted for: it being indisputable by too much convergence of testimony that trains upon trains of troops seen in the light of day, and not recognised by innumerable watchers and wonderers as English, were pouring down from the north and to the east during the end of last week and the beginning of this. It seems difficult that there should have been that amount of variously scattered hallucination, misconception, fantastication or whatever—yet I chuck up the sponge!

Far from brilliant the news to-day of course, and likely I am afraid to act on your disposition to go back to Paris; which I think a very gallant and magnificent and ideal one, but which at the same time I well understand, within you, the urgent force of. I feel I cannot take upon myself to utter any relevant remark about it at all—any plea against it, which you wouldn't in the least mind, once the thing *determined* for you, or any in favour of it, which you so intensely don't require. I understand too well—that's the devil of such a state of mind about everything. Whatever resolution you take and apply you will put it through to your very highest honour and accomplishment of service; *sur quoi* I take off my hat to you down to the ground, and only desire not to worry you with vain words. . . . I kind of hanker for any scrap of really domestic fact about you all that I may be able to extract from Frederick if he comes. But I shall get at you again quickly in this way, and am your all-faithfullest

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

It will be remembered that the first news of the bombardment of Rheims Cathedral suggested greater destruction than was the fact at that time. The wreckage was of course carried much further before the end of the war.

Lamb House, Rye.

September 21st, 1914.

Dearest Edith,

Rheims is the most unspeakable and immeasurable horror and infamy—and what is appalling and heart-breaking is that it's "*for ever and ever.*" But no words fill the abyss of it—nor touch it, nor relieve one's heart nor light by a spark the blackness; the ache of

one's howl and the anguish of one's execration aren't mitigated by a shade, even as one brands it as the most hideous crime ever perpetrated against the mind of man. There it *was*—and now all the tears of rage of all the bereft millions and all the crowding curses of all the wondering ages will never bring a stone of it back! Yet one tries—even now—tries to get something from saying that the measure is so full as to overflow at last in a sort of vindictive deluge (though for all the stones that *that* will replace!) and that the arm of final retributive justice becomes by it an engine really in some degree proportionate to the act. I positively do think it helps me a little, to think of how they can be made to wear the shame, in the pitiless glare of history, forever and ever—and not even to get rid of it when they are maddened, literally, by the weight. And for that the preparations must have already at this hour begun: how *can't* they be as a tremendous force fighting on the side, fighting in the very fibres, of France? I think too somehow—though I don't know *why*, practically—of how nothing conceivable could have so damned and dished them forever in our great art-loving country!

. . . If you go on Thursday I can't hope to see you again for the present, but all my blessings on all your splendid resolution, your courage and charity! Right must you be not to take back with you any of your Englishry—it's no place for them yet. Frederick will hang on your first signal to him again—and meanwhile is a very great boon to me. I wish I could do something for White, if (as I take it) he stays behind; put him up at the Athenæum or something. . . . All homage and affection to you, dearest Edith, from your desolate and devoted old

H. J.

*To Mrs. T. S. Perry.*

*Dictated.*

Lamb House, Rye.

September 22nd, 1914.

My dear Lilla,

Forgive my use of this fierce legibility to speak to you in my now at best faltering accents. We eat and drink, and talk and walk and think, we sleep and wake and live and breathe only the War, and it is a bitter regimen enough and such as, frankly, I hoped I shouldn't live on, disillusioned and horror-ridden, to see the like of. Not, however, that there isn't an uplifting and thrilling side to it, as far as this country is concerned, which makes unspeakably for interest, makes one at hours forget all the dreadfulness and cling to what it means in another way. What it above all means, and has meant for me all summer, is that, looking almost straight over hence, from the edge of the Channel, toward the horizon-rim just beyond the curve of which the infamous violation of Belgium has been all these weeks kept up, I haven't had to face the shame of our not having drawn the sword for the massacred and tortured Flemings, and not having left our inestimable France, after vows exchanged, to shift for herself. England all but grovelled in the dust to the Kaiser for peace up to the very latest hour, but when his last reply was simply to let loose his hordes on Belgium in silence, with no account of the act to this country or to France beyond the most fatuously arrogant "Because I choose to, damn you!" in all recorded history, there began for us here a process of pulling ourselves together of which the end is so far from being yet that I feel it as only the most rudimentary beginning. However, I said I couldn't talk—and here I am



talking, and I mustn't go on, it all takes me too far; I must only feel that all your intelligence and all your sympathy, yours and dear Thomas's, and those of every one of you, is intensely with us—and that the appalling and crowning horror of the persistent destruction of Rheims, which we just learn, isn't even wanted to give the measure of the insanity of ferocity and presumption against which Europe is making a stand. Do ask Thomas to write me a participating word: and think of me meanwhile as very achingly and shakily but still all confidently and faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Rhoda Broughton.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

October 1st, 1914.

My dear Rhoda,

. . . For myself, with Peggy's necessary departure from my side some three weeks ago, I could no longer endure the solitudinous (and platitudinous) side of my rural retreat; I found I simply ate my heart out in the state of privation of converse (any converse that counted) and of remoteness from the source of information—as our information goes. So, having very blessedly this perch to come to, here I am while the air of superficial summer still reigns. London is agitating but interesting—in certain aspects I find it even quite uplifting—and the mere feeling that the huge burden of one's tension is shared is something of a relief, even if it does show the strain as so much reflected back to one. Immensely do I understand the need of younger men to take refuge from it in *doing*, for all they are worth—to be old and doddering now is for

a male person not at all glorious. But if to *feel*, with consuming passion, under the call of the great cause, is any sort of attestation of use, then I contribute my fond vibration. . . . During these few days in town I have seen almost no one, and this London, which is, to the eye, immensely full of people (I mean of the sort who are not here usually at this season,) is also a strange, rather sinister London in the sense that "social intercourse" seems (and most naturally) scarcely to exist. I'm afraid that even your salon, were you here, would inevitably become more or less aware of the shrinkage. Let that console you a little for not yet setting it up. Dear little — I shall try to see— I grieve deeply over her complication of horrors. We all have the latter, but some people (and those the most amiable and most innocent) seem to have them with an extra devilish twist. Not "sweets" to the sweet now, but a double dose of bitterness. It's all a huge strain and a huge nightmare and a huge unspeakability—but that isn't my last word or my last *sense*. This great country has found, and is still more finding, certain parts of herself again that had seemed for long a good deal lost. But here they are now—magnificent; and we haven't yet seen a quarter of them. The whole will press down the scale of fortune. What we all are together (in our so unequal ways) "out for" we shall *do*, through thick and thin and whatever enormity of opposition. We sufficiently want to and we sufficiently *can*—both by material and volition. Therefore if we don't achieve, it will only be because we have lost our essential, our admirable, our soundest and roundest identity—and that is simply inconceivable to your faithful and affectionate old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

The allusions in the following are to an article of Mr. Gosse's on the effect of the war of 1870 upon French literature, and to the publication at this moment of H. J.'s *Notes on Novelists*.

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
October 15th, 1914.

My dear Gosse,

... Your article for the *Edinburgh* is of an admirable interest, beautifully done, for the number of things so happily and vividly expressed in it, and attaching altogether from its emotion and its truth. How much, alas, to say on the whole portentous issue (I mean the particular one you deal with) must one feel there is—and the more the further about one looks and thinks! It makes me much want to see you again, and we must speedily arrange for that. I am probably doing on Saturday something very long out of order for me—going to spend Sunday with a friend near town; but as quickly as possible next week shall I appeal to you to come and lunch with me: in fact why not now ask you to let it be either on Tuesday or Wednesday, 20th or 21st, as suits you best, here, at 1.30? A word as to this at any time up to Tuesday a.m., and by telephone as well as any otherhow, will be all sufficient.

Momentous indeed your recall, with such exactitude and authority, of the effect in France of the 1870-71 cataclysm, and interesting to me as bringing back what I seem to myself to have been then almost closely present at; so that the sense of it all again flushes for me. I remember how the death of the immense old Dumas didn't

in the least emerge to the naked eye, and how one vaguely heard that poor Gautier, "librarian to the Empress," had in a day found everything give way beneath him and let him go down and down! What analogies verily, I fear, with some of our present aspects and prospects! I didn't so much as know till your page told me that Jules Lemaitre was killed by that stroke: awfully tragic and pathetic fact. Gautier but just survived the whole other convulsion—it had led to his death early in '73. Felicitous Sainte-Beuve, who had got out of the way, with his incomparable penetration, just the preceding year! Had I been at your elbow I should have suggested a touch or two about dear old George Sand, holding out through the darkness at Nohant, but even there giving out some lights that are caught up in her letters of the moment. Beautiful that you put the case as you do for the newer and younger Belgians, and affirm it with such emphasis for Verhaeren—at present, I have been told, in this country. Immense my respect for those who succeed in going on, as you tell of Gaston Paris's having done during that dreadful winter and created life and force by doing. I myself find concentration of an extreme difficulty: the proportions of things have so changed and one's poor old "values" received such a shock. I say to myself that this is all the more reason why one should recover as many of them as possible and keep hold of them in the very interest of civilisation and of the honour of our race; as to which I am certainly right—but it takes some doing! Tremendous the little fact you mention (though indeed I had taken it for granted) about the *absolute* cessation of ——'s last "big sale" after Aug. 1st. Very considerable his haul, fortunately—and *if* gathered in!—up

to the eve of the fell hour. . . . All I myself hear from Paris is an occasional word from Mrs. Wharton, who is full of ardent activity and ingenious devotion there—a really heroic plunge into the breach. But this is all now, save that I am sending you a volume of gathered-in (for the first time) old critical papers, the publication of which was arranged for in the spring, and the book then printed and seen through the press, so that there has been for me a kind of painful inevitability in its so grotesquely and false-notedly coming out now. But no—I also say to myself—nothing serious and felt and sincere, nothing “good,” is anything but essentially in order to-day, whether economically and “attractively” so or not! Put my volume at any rate away on a high shelf—to be taken down again only in the better and straighter light that I invincibly believe in the dawning of. Let me hear, however sparsely, about Tuesday or Wednesday and believe me all faithfully yours,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Grace Norton.*

“W. E. D.” is William Darwin, brother-in-law to Charles Eliot Norton. “Richard” is the latter’s son, Director of the American School of Archaeology in Rome, at this time engaged in organising a motor-ambulance of American volunteers in France. He unhappily died of meningitis in Paris, August 2, 1918.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
October 16th, 1914.

Very dear old Friend,

How can I thank you enough for the deep intelligence and sympathy of your beautiful and touching little letter, this morning received, or sufficiently bless the impulse that made you

write it? For really the strain and stress of the whole horribly huge case over here is such that the hand of understanding and sympathy reached out across the sea causes a grateful vibration, and among all our vibrations those of gratitude don't seem appointed to be on the whole the most numerous: though indeed I mustn't speak as if within our very own huge scope we have *not* plenty of those too! That we can feel, or that the individual, poor resisting-as-he-can creature, may on such a scale feel, and so intensely and potently, *with* the endlessly multitudinous others who are subject to the same assault, and such hundreds of thousands of them to so much greater—this is verily his main great spiritual harbourage; since so many of those that need more or less to serve have become now but the waste of waters! Happy are those of your and my generation, in very truth, who have been able, or may still be, to do as dear W. E. D. so enviably did, and close their eyes without the sense of deserting their post or dodging their duty. We feel, don't we? that we have stuck to and done ours long enough to have a right to say "Oh, *this* wasn't in the bargain; it's the claim of Fate only in the form of a ruffian or a swindler, and with such I'll have no dealing:"—the perfection of which felicity, I have but just heard, so long after the event, was that of poor dear fine Jules Lemaitre, who, unwell at the end of July and having gone down to his own little native *pays*, on the Loire, to be *soigné*, read in the newspaper of the morrow that war upon France had been declared, and fell back on the instant into a swoon from which he never awoke. . . . The happiest, almost the enviable (except those who may emulate William) are the younger doers of things and engagers in action, like our admirable Richard (for I

find him so admirable !) whom I can't sufficiently commend and admire for having thrown himself into Paris, where he can most serve. But I won't say much more now, save that I think of you with something that I should call the liveliest renewal of affection if my affection for you had ever been *less* than lively ! I rejoice in whatever Peggy has been able to tell you of me ; but don't you, on your side, fall into the error of regretting that she came back. I have done nothing so much since her departure as bless the day of it ; so wrong a place does this more and more become for those whose life isn't definitely fixed here, and so little could I have borne the anxiety and responsibility of having her on my mind in addition to having myself ! Have me on *yours*, dearest Grace, as much as you like, for it is exquisitely sensible to me that you so faithfully and tenderly do ; and that does nothing but good—real helpful good, to yours all affectionately,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

A passage (translated by M. Alfred de Saint André) from H. J.'s letter to Mrs. Wharton of September 3rd (see above) had been read at a meeting of the Académie Française, and published in the *Journal des Débats*. The Hôtel d'Iéna was at this time the headquarters of the British Red Cross Society in Paris.

21 Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, S.W.

October 17th, 1914.

Very dear old Friend !

Yesterday came your brave letter with its two so remarkable enclosures and also the interesting one lent me to read by Dorothy Ward. The sense they give me of your heroic

tension and valour is something I can't express—any more than I need to for your perfect assurance of it. Posted here in London your letter was by the Walter Gays, whom I hunger and thirst for, though without having as yet got more into touch than through a telephone message on their behalf an hour ago by the manager, or whoever, of their South Kensington Hotel. I most unfortunately can't see them this p.m. as they proposed, as I am booked for the long un-precedented adventure of going down for a couple of nights to Qu'acre; in response to a most touching and not-to-be-resisted letter from its master. G. L. and P. L. are both to be there apparently; and I really rather welcome the break for a few hours with the otherwise unbroken pitch of London. However, let me not so much as name that in presence of your tremendous pitch of Paris; which however is all mixed, in my consciousness, with yours, so that the intensity of yours drums through, all the while, as the big note. With all my heart do I bless the booming work (though not the booming anything else) which makes for you from day to day the valid *carapace*, the invincible, if not perhaps strictly invulnerable, armour. So golden-plated you shine straight over at me—and at us all!

Of the liveliest interest to me of course the Débats version of the poor old Rheims passage of my letter to you at the time of the horror—in respect to which I feel so greatly honoured by such grand courtesy shown it, and by the generous translation, for which I shall at the first possible moment write and thank Saint André, from whom I have also had an immensely revealing small photograph of one of the aspects of the outraged cathedral, the vividest picture of the irreparable ravage. Splendid indeed and truly



precious your report of the address of that admirable man to the Rheims tribunal at the hour of supreme trial. I echo with all my soul your lively homage to it, and ask myself if anything on earth can ever have been so blackly grotesque (or grotesquely black !) as the sublimely smug proposal of the Germans to wipe off the face of the world as a living force—substituting for it apparently *their* portentous, their cumbrous and complicated idiom—the race that has for its native incomparable tone, such form, such speech, such reach, such an expressional consciousness, as humanity was on that occasion honoured and, so to speak, transfigured, by being able to find (M. Louis Bossu aiding !) in its chords. What a splendid creation of life, on the excellent man's part, just by play of the resource most familiar and most indispensable to him !

This is all at this moment. . . . I have still five pounds of your cheque in hand—wanting only to bestow it where I practically see it used. I haven't sent more to Rye, but conferred three a couple of days since on an apparently most meritorious, and most intelligently-worked, refuge for some 60 or 70 that is being carried on, in the most fraternal spirit, by a real working-class circle at Hammersmith. I shall distil your balance with equal care ; and I accompany each of your donations with a like sum of my own. We are sending off hence now every day regularly some 7 or 8 London papers to the Hôtel d'Iéna.

Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Thomas Sergeant Perry.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
25th Oct., 1914.

My dear Thomas,

I have had a couple of letters from you of late for which I thank you, but the contents of which reach me, you will understand, but through all the obstruction and oppression and obsession of all our conditions here—the strain and stress of which seem at times scarcely to be borne. Nevertheless we do bear them—to my sense magnificently; so that if during the very first weeks the sense of the huge public horror which seemed to have been appointed to poison the final dregs of my consciousness was nothing but sickening and overwhelming, so now I have lived on, as we all have, into much of another vision: I at least feel and take such an interest in the present splendid activity and position and office of this country, and in all the fine importance of it that beats upon one from all round, that the whole effect is uplifting and thrilling and consoling enough to carry one through whatever darkness, whatever dimness. As I think I said in a few words some weeks ago to Lilla, dear old England is not a whit less sound, less fundamentally sane, than she ever was, but in fact ever so much *finer* and inwardly wiser, and has been appointed by the gods to find herself again, without more delay, in some of those aspects and on some of those sides that she had allowed to get too much overlaid and encrusted. She is doing this in the grand manner, and I can only say that I find the spectacle really splendid to assist at. After three months in the country

I came back to London early, sequestration there not at all answering for nerves or spirits, and find myself in this place comparatively nearer to information and to supporting and suggestive contact. I don't say it doesn't all at the best even remain much of the nightmare that it instantly began by being: but gleams and rifts come through as from high and bedimmed, yet far-looking and, as it were, promising and portending windows: in fine I should feel I had lost something that ministers to life and knowledge if our collective experience, for all its big black streaks, hadn't been imposed on us. Let me not express myself, none the less, as if I could really thus talk about it all: I can't—it's all too close and too horrific and too unspeakable and too immeasurable. The facts, or the falsities, of "news" reach you doubtless as much as they reach us here—or rather with much more licence: and really what I have wanted most to say is how deeply I rejoice in the sympathetic sense of your words, few of these as your couple of notes have devoted to it. You speak of some other things—that is of the glorious "Institute," and of the fond severance of your connection with it, and other matters; but I suppose you will understand when I say that we are so shut in, roundabout, and so pressed upon by our single huge consciousness of the public situation, that all other sounds than those that immediately belong to it pierce the thick medium but with a muffled effect, and that in fine nothing really draws breath among us but the multitudinous realities of the War. Think what it must be when even the interest of the Institute becomes dim and *faint*! But I won't attempt to write you a word of really current history—ancient history by the time it reaches you: I throw myself back through all our anxieties and

fluctuations, which I do my best not to be at the momentary mercy of, one way or the other, to certain deep fundamentals, which I can't go into either, but which become vivid and sustaining here in the light of all one sees and feels and gratefully takes in. I find the general community, the whole scene of energy, immensely sustaining and inspiring—so great a thing, every way, to be present at that it almost salves over the haunting sense of all the horrors: though indeed nothing can mitigate the huge Belgian one, the fact, not seen for centuries, of virtually a whole nation, harmless and innocent, driven forth into ruin and misery, suffering of the most hideous sort and on the most unprecedented scale—unless it be the way that England is making a tremendous pair of the tenderest arms to gather them into her ample, but so crowded, lap. That is the most haunting thing, but the oppression and obsession are all heavy enough, and the waking up to them again each morning after the night's oblivion, if one has at all got it, is a really bad moment to pass. All life indeed resolves itself into the most ferocious practice in passing bad moments. . . . Stand all of you to your guns, and think and believe how you can really and measurably and morally help us! Yours, dear Thomas, all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Henry James, junior.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
October 30th, 1914.

Dearest Harry,

. . . Any "news," of the from day to day kind, would be stale and flat by the time this reaches you—and you know in New York at the moment of my writing, very much what we know of our grounds of anxiety and of hope, grounds of proceeding and production, moral and material, in every sort and shape. If we only had at this moment the extra million of men that the now so more or less incredible optimism and amiability of our spirit toward Germany, during these last abysmal years, kept knocking the bottom out of our having or preparing, the benefit and the effect would be heavenly to think of. And yet on the other hand I partly console myself for the comparatively awkward and clumsy fact that we are only growing and gathering in that amount of reinforcement *now*, by the shining light it throws on England's moral position and attitude, her predominantly incurable good-nature, the sublimity or the egregious folly, one scarcely knows which to call it, of her innocence in face of the most prodigiously massed and worked-out intentions of aggression of which "history furnishes an example." So it is that, though the country has become at a bound the hugest workshop of every sort of preparation conceivable, the men have, in the matter of numbers, to be wrought into armies *after* instead of before—which has always been England's sweet old way, and has in the past managed to suffice. The stuff and

the material fortunately, however, are admirable—having had already time to show to what tune they are; and, as I think I wrote your Mother the other day, one feels the resources, alike of character and of material, in the way of men and of every other sort of substance, immense; and so, not consenting to be heaved to and fro by the short view or the news of the moment, one rests one's mind on one or two big general convictions—primarily perhaps that of the certainty that Germany's last apprehension was that of a prolonged war, that it never entered for a moment into the arrogance of her programme, that she has every reason to find such a case ultra-grinding and such a prospect ultra-dismal: whereas nothing else was taken for granted here, as an absolute grim necessity, from the first. But I am writing you remarks quite as I didn't mean to; you have had plenty of these—at least Irving Street has had—before; and what I would a thousand times rather have, is some remarks from there, be they only of an ardent sympathy and participation—as of course whatever else in the world could they be? I am so utterly and passionately enlisted, up to my eyes and over my aged head, in the greatness of our cause, that it fairly sickens me not to find every imagination rise to it: the case—the case of the failure to rise—then seems to me so base and abject an exhibition! And yet I remind myself, even as I say [it], that the case has never really once happened to me—I have personally not encountered any low likeness of it; and therefore should rather have said that it *would* so horribly affect me *if* it were supposable. England seems to me, at the present time, in so magnificent a position before the world, in respect to the history and logic of her action, that I don't see a grain in the scale of her rightness that

doesn't count for attestation of it; and in short it really "makes up" almost for some of the huge horrors that constantly assault our vision, to find one can be on a "side," with all one's weight, that one never supposed likely to be offered one in such perfection, and that has only to be exposed to more and more light, to make one more glory, so to speak, for one's attachment, for one's association.

*Saturday, Oct. 31st.* I had to break this off yesterday, and now can't do much for fear of missing today's, a Saturday's American post. Only everything I tried yesterday to say is more and more before me—all feelings and impressions intensifying by their very nature, as they do, from day to day under the general outward pressure, literally the pressure of *experience* they from hour to hour receive; such experience and such pressure for instance as my having pulled up for a few minutes, as I was beginning this again, to watch from my windows a great swinging body of the London Scottish, as one supposes, marching past at the briskest possible step with its long line of freshly enlisted men behind it. These are now in London, of course, impressions of every hour, or of every moment; but there is always a particular big thrill in the collective passage of the stridingly and just a bit flappingly kilted and bonneted, when it isn't a question of mere parade or exercise, as we have been used to seeing it, but a suggestion, everything in the air so aiding, of a real piece of action, a charge or an irresistible press forward, on the field itself. Of a like suggestion, in a general way, was it to me yesterday afternoon to have gone again to see my—already "my"!—poor Belgian wounded at St. Bartholomew's; with whom it's quite a balm to one's feelings to have established something of a helpful relation, thanks to the

power of freedom of speech, by which I mean use of idiom, between us—and thanks again to one's so penetrating impression of their stricken and bereft patience and mild fatalism. Not one of those with whom I talked the last time had yet come by the shadow of a clue or trace of any creature belonging to him, young wife or child or parent or brother, in all the thick obscurity of their scatterment; and once more I felt the tremendous force of such convulsions as the now-going-on in wrenching and dislocating the pre-supposable and rendering the actual monstrous of the hour, whatever it is, all the suffering creature *can* feel. Even more interesting, and in a different way, naturally, was a further hour at St. B's with a couple of wardsful of British wounded, just straight back, by extraordinary good fortune, from the terrific fighting round about Ypres, which is still going on, but from which they had been got away in their condition, at once, via Saint-Nazaire and Southampton; three or four of whom, all of the Grenadier Guards, who seemed genuinely glad of one's approach (not being for the time at all otherwise visited,) struck me as quite ideal and *natural* soldier-stuff of the easy, the bright and instinctive, and above all the, in this country, probably quite inexhaustible, kind. Those I mention were intelligent specimens of course—one picked them out rather for their intelligent faces; but the ease, as I say, the goodhumour, the gaiety and simplicity, without the ghost of swagger, of their individual adaptability to their job, made an impression of them about as satisfactory, so to speak, as one could possibly desire it. . . . But this is all now—and you'll say it's enough! Ever your affectionate old Uncle,

HENRY JAMES.



*To Hugh Walpole.*

Mr Walpole was at this time in Russia.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
November 21st, 1914.

Dearest Hugh,

This is a great joy—your letter of November 12th has just come, to my extreme delight, and I answer it, you see, within a very few hours. It is by far the best letter you have ever written me, and I am touched and interested by it more than I can say. Let me tell you at once that I sent you that last thing in type-copy because of an anxious calculation that such a form would help to secure its safe arrival. Your own scrap was a signal of the probable non-arrival of anything that seemed in the least to defy legibility; therefore I said to myself that what was flagrantly and blatantly legible *would* presumably reach you. . . . I had better make use of this chance, however, to give you an inkling of *our* affairs, such as they are, rather than indulge in mere surmises and desires, fond and faithful though these be, about your own eventualities. London is of course under all our stress very interesting, to me deeply and infinitely moving—but on a basis and in ways that make the life we have known here fade into grey mists of insignificance. People “meet” a little, but very little, every social habit and convention has broken down, save with a few vulgarians and utter mistakers (mistakers, I mean, about the decency of things;) and for myself, I confess, I find there are very few persons I care to see—only those to whom and to whose state of feeling I am really attached. Promiscuous chatter on the public situation and the gossip thereanent of more or less wailing

women in particular give unspeakably on my nerves. Depths of sacred silence seem to me to prescribe themselves in presence of the sanctities of action of those who, in unthinkable conditions almost, are magnificently *doing* the thing. Then right and left are all the figures of mourning—though such proud erect ones—over the blow that has come to them. *There* the women are admirable—the mothers and wives and sisters; the mothers in particular, since it's so much the younger lives, the fine seed of the future, that are offered and taken. The rate at which they are taken is appalling—but then I think of France and Russia and even of Germany herself, and the vision simply overwhelms and breaks the heart. “The German dead, the German dead!” I above all say to myself—in such hecatombs have *they* been ruthlessly piled up by those who have driven them, from behind, to their fate; and it for the moment almost makes me forget Belgium—though when I *remember* that disembowelled country my heart is at once hardened to *every* son of a Hun. Belgium we have hugely and portentously with us; if never in the world was a nation so driven forth, so on the other hand was one never so taken to another's arms. And the Dutch have been nobly hospitable! . . . Immensely interesting what you say of the sublime newness of spirit of the great Russian people—of whom we are thinking here with the most confident admiration. I met a striking specimen the other day who was oddly enough in the Canadian contingent (he had been living two or three years in Canada and had volunteered there;) and who was of a stature, complexion, expression, and above all of a shining candour, which made him a kind of army-corps in himself. . . . But goodnight, dearest Hugh. I sit here writing

late, in the now extraordinary London blackness of darkness and (almost) tension of stillness. The alarms we have had here as yet come to nothing. Please believe in the fond fidelity with which I think of you. Oh for the day of reparation and reunion! I hope for you that you *may* have the great and terrible experience of Ambulance service at the front. Ah how I pray you also *may* receive this benediction from your affectionate old

H. J.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Mr. Walter Berry had just passed through London on his way back to Paris from a brief expedition to Berlin. The revived work which H. J. was now carrying forward was *The Sense of the Past*.

21 Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
December 1st, 1914.

Dearest Edith,

Walter offers me kindly to carry you my word, and I don't want him to go empty-handed, though verily only the poor shrunken sediment of me is practically left after the overwhelming and *écrasant* effect of listening to him on the subject of the transcendent high pitch of Berlin. I kick myself for being so flattened out by it, and ask myself moreover why I should feel it in any degree as a revelation, when it consists really of nothing but what one has been constantly saying to one's self—one's mind's eye perpetually blinking at it, as presumably the case—all these weeks and weeks. It's the personal note of testimony that has caused it to knock me up—what has permitted this being the nature and degree of my unspeakable and abysmal sensibility where "our cause" is concerned, and the fantastic

force, the prodigious passion, with which my affections are engaged in it. They grow more and more so—and my soul is in the whole connection one huge sore ache. That makes me dodge lurid lights when I ought doubtless but personally to glare back at them—as under the effect of many of my impressions here I frequently do—or almost! For the moment I am quite floored—but I suppose I shall after a while pick myself up. I dare say, for that matter, that I am down pretty often—for I find I am constantly picking myself up. So even this time I don't really despair. About Belgium Walter was so admirably and unspeakably interesting—if the word be not mean for the scale of such tragedy—which you'll have from him all for yourself. If I don't call his Berlin simply interesting and have done with it, that's because the very faculty of attention is so overstrained by it as to hurt. This takes you all my love. I have got back to trying to work—on one of three books begun and abandoned—at the end of some “30,000 words”—15 years ago, and fished out of the depths of an old drawer at Lamb House (I sent Miss Bosanquet down to hunt it up) as perhaps offering a certain defiance of subject to the law by which most things now perish in the public blight. This does seem to kind of intrinsically resist—and I have hopes. But I must rally now before getting back to it. So pray for me that I do, and invite dear Walter to kneel by my side and believe me your faithfully fond

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. T. S. Perry.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
December 11th, 1914.

Dear and so sympathetic Lilla !

I have been these many, by which I mean too many, days in receipt of your brave letter and impassioned sonnet—a combination that has done me, I assure you, no end of good. I so ache and yearn, here more or less on the spot, with the force of my interest in our public situation, I feel myself in short such a glowing and flaring firebrand, that I can't have enough of the blest article you supply, my standard of what constitutes enough being so high! . . . Your sonnet strikes me as very well made—which all sonnets from “female” pens are not; and since you invoke American association with us you do the fine thing in invoking it up to the hilt. Of course you can all do us most good by simply feeling and uttering as the best of you do—there having come in my way several copious pronouncements by the American Press than which it has seemed to me there could have been nothing better in the way of perfect understanding and happy expression. I have said to myself in presence of some of them “Oh blest and wondrous the miracle; the force of events, the light of our Cause, is absolutely inspiring the newspaper tone over there with the last thing one ever expected it to have, style and the weight of style; so that *all* the good things are literally on our side at once!”

It's delightful to me to hear of your local knitting and sewing circle—it quite goes to my heart in fact to catch your echo of the brave

click of the needles at gentle Hancock! They click under my own mild roof from morning to night, so that I can't quite say why I don't find my soup flavoured with khaki wool or my napkin inadvertently replaced by a large grey sock. But the great thing is that it's really a pity you are not here for participation in the fine old English thrill and throb of all that goes forward simply from day to day and that makes the common texture of our life: you would generously abound in the sense of it, I feel, and be grateful for it as a kind of invaluable, a really cherishable, "race" experience. One wouldn't have to explain anything to you—you would take it all down in a gulp, the kind of gulp in which one has to indulge to keep from breaking down under the positive pang of comprehension and emotion. Two afternoons ago I caught that gulp, twice over, in the very act—while listening to that dear and affable Emile Boutroux make an exquisite philosophic address to the British Academy, which he had come over for the purpose of, and then hearing the less consummate, yet sturdily sensitive and expressive Lord Chancellor (Haldane) utter to him, in return, the thanks of the select and intense auditory and their sense of the beautiful and wonderful and unprecedented unison of nations that the occasion symbolised and celebrated. In the quietest way in the world Boutroux just escaped "breaking down" in his preliminary reference to what this meant and how he felt, and just so the good Haldane grazed the same almost inevitable accident in speaking for *us*, all us present and the whole public consciousness, when he addressed the lecturer afterwards. What was so moving was its being so utterly unrehearsed and immediate—its coming, on one side and the other, so of itself, and being a sort of thing that hasn't since God

knows when, if ever, found itself taking place between nation and nation. I kind of wish that the U.S.A. were not (though of necessity, I admit) so absent from this feast of friendship; it figures for me as such an extraordinary luxury that the whirligig of time has turned up for us such an intimacy of association with France and that France so exquisitely responds to it. I quite tasted of the quality of this last fact two nights ago when an English officer, a most sane and acute middle-aged Colonel, dined with me and another friend, and gave us a real vision of what the presence of the British forces in the field now means for the so extraordinarily intelligent and responsive French, and what a really unprecedented relation (I do wish to goodness *we* were in it!) between a pair of fraternising and reciprocating people it represents. The truth is of course that the British participation has been extraordinarily, quite miraculously, effective and sustaining, has had in it a *quality* of reinforcement out of proportion to its numbers, though these are steadily growing, and that all the intelligence of the wonderful France simply floods the case with appreciation and fraternity; these things shown in the charming way in which the French most of all *can* show the like under full inspiration. Yes, it's an association that I do permit myself at wanton moments to wish that *we*, in our high worthiness to be of it, weren't so out of! But I mustn't, my dear Lilla, go maundering on. Intercede with Thomas to the effect of his writing me some thoroughly, some intensely and immensely participating word, for the further refreshment of my soul. It is refreshed here, as well as ravaged, oh at times so ravaged: by the general sense of what is maturing and multiplying, steadily multiplying, on behalf of the Allies—out of the immediate circle of whose effectively

stored and steadily expanding energies we reach over to a slightly bedimmed but inexpressible Russia with a deep-felt sense that before we have all done with it together she is going somehow to emerge as the most interesting, the most original and the most potent of us all. Let Thomas take to himself from me that so I engage on behalf of his chosen people! Yours and his and the Daughter's all intimately and faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

21 Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
December 17th, 1914.

My dear Gosse,

This is a scratch of postscript to my note this evening posted to you—prompted by the consciousness of not having therein made a word of reply to your question as to what I “think of things.” The recovered pressure of that question makes me somehow positively *want* to say that (I think) I don't “think” of them at all—though I try to; that I only feel, and feel, and *toujours* feel about them unspeakably, and about nothing else whatever—feeling so in Wordsworth's terms of exaltations, agonies and loves, and (our) unconquerable mind. Yes, I kind of make out withal that through our insistence an increasing purpose runs, and that one's vision of its final effect (though only with the aid of *time*) grows less and less dim, so that one seems to find at moments it's almost sharp! And meanwhile what a purely suicidal record for themselves the business of yesterday—the women and children (and babes in arms) slaughtered at Scarborough and Whitby, with their turning



and fleeing as soon as ever they had killed enough for the moment. Oh, I do "think" enough to believe in retribution for *that*. So I've kind of answered you.

Ever yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Grace Norton.*

This follows on the letter to Miss Norton of Oct. 16, 1914, dealing with the work in France of her nephew, Richard Norton.

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
January 1st, 1915.

Dearest Grace !

I waste no time in explaining again how reduced I am to the use of this machinery by the absolute physical effect on my poor old organism of the huge tension and oppression of our conditions here—to say nothing of the moral effect, with which the other is of course intensely mixed. I can tell you better thus moreover than by any weaker art what huge satisfaction I had yesterday in an hour or two of Richard's company; he having generously found time to lunch with me during two or three days that he is snatching away from the Front, under urgency of business. I gathered from him that you hear from him with a certain frequency and perhaps some fulness—I know it's always his desire that you shall; but even so you perhaps scarce take in how "perfectly splendid" he is—though even if you in a manner do I want to put it on record to you, for myself, that I find him unmitigatedly magnificent. It's impossible for me to overstate my impression

of his intelligent force, his energy and lucidity, his gallantry and resolution, or of the success the unswerving application of these things is making for him and for his enterprise. Not that I should speak as if he and that were different matters—he *is* the enterprise, and that, on its side, is his very self; and in fine it is a tremendous tonic—among a good many tonics that we have indeed, thank goodness!—to get the sense of his richly beneficent activity. He seemed extremely well and “fit,” and suffered me to ply him with all the questions that one’s constant longing here for a nearer view, combined with a kind of shrinking terror of it, given all the misery the greatest nearness seems to reveal, makes one restlessly keep up. What he has probably told you, with emphasis, by letter, is the generalisation most sadly forced upon him—the comparative supportability of the fact of the wounded and the sick beside the desolating view of the ravaged refugees. He can help the former much more than the latter, and the ability to do his special job with success is more or less sustaining and rewarding; but the sight of the wretched people with their villages and homes and resources utterly annihilated, and they simply staring at the blackness of their ruin, with the very clothes on their backs scarce left to them, is clearly something that would quite break the heart if one could afford to let it. If he isn’t able to give you the detail of much of *that* tragedy, so much the better for you—save indeed for your thereby losing too some examples of how he succeeds in occasional mitigations *quand même*, thanks to the positive, the quite blest, ferocity of his passion not to fail of any service he can with the least conceivability render. He was most interesting, he was altogether admirable, as to his attitude in the matter

of going *outside* of the strict job of carrying the military sick and wounded, and them only, as the ancient "Geneva Conventions" confine a Red Cross Ambulance to doing. There has been some perfunctory protest, not long since, on the part of some blank agent of that (Red Cross) body, in relation to his picking up stricken and helpless civilians and seeing them as far as possible on their way to some desperate refuge or relief; whereupon he had given this critic full in the face the whole philosophy of his proceedings and intentions, letting the personage know that when the Germans ruthlessly broke every Geneva Convention by attempting to shell him and his cars and his wounded whenever they could spy a chance, he was absolutely for doing in mercy and assistance what they do in their dire brutality, and might be depended upon to convey not only every suffering civilian but any armed and trudging soldiers whom a blest chance might offer him. His remonstrant visitor remained blank and speechless, but at the same time duly impressed or even floored, and Dick will have, I think, so far as any further or more serious protest is concerned, an absolutely free hand. The Germans have violated with the last cynicism both the letter and the spirit of every agreement they ever signed, and it's little enough that the poor retaliation left us, not that "in kind," which I think we may describe ourselves as despising, but that in mere reparation of their ravage and mere scrappy aid to ourselves, should be compassed by us when we *can* compass it. . . . Richard told me yesterday that the aspect of London struck him as having undergone a great change since his last rush over—in the sense of the greater flagrancy of the pressure of the War; and one feels that perfectly on the spot and without having to go away and

come back for it. There corresponds with it doubtless a much tighter screw-up of the whole public consciousness, worked upon by all kinds of phenomena that are very penetrating here, but that doubtless are reduced to some vagueness as reported to you across the sea—when reported at all, as most of them can't be. Goodbye at any rate for this hour. What I most wanted to give you was the strong side-wind and conveyed virtue of Dick's visit. I hope you are seeing rather more than less of Alice and Peggy, to whom I succeed in writing pretty often—and perhaps things that if repeated to you, as I trust they sometimes are, help you to some patient allowance for your tremendously attached old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Dacre Vincent.*

This refers to the loss of a fine old mulberry-tree that had stood on the lawn at Lamb House.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
January 6th, 1915.

My dear Margaret,

It has been delightful to me to hear from you even on so sorry a subject as my poor old prostrated tree; which it was most kind of you to go and take a pitying look at. He might have gone on for some time, I think, in the absence of an *inordinate* gale—but once the fury of the tempest really descended he was bound to give way, because his poor old heart was dead, his immense old trunk hollow. He had no power to resist left when the south-wester caught him by his vast *crinière* and simply twisted his head round and round. It's very sad, for he was the making

of the garden—he was *it* in person; and now I feel for the time as if I didn't care what becomes of it—my interest wholly collapses. But what a folly to talk of *that* prostration, among all the prostrations that surround us! One hears of them here on every side—and they represent (of course I am speaking of the innumerable splendid young men, fallen in their flower) the crushingly black side of all the horrible business, the irreparable dead loss of what is most precious, the inestimable seed of the future. The air is full of the sense of all *that* dreadfulness—the echoes forever in one's ears. Still, I haven't wanted to wail to you—and don't write you for that. London isn't cheerful, but vast and dark and damp and very visibly *depleted* (as well may be!) and yet is also in a sense uplifting and reassuring, such an impression does one get here after all of the enormous resources of this empire. I mean that the *reminders* at every turn are so great. I see a few people—quite as many as I can do with; for I find I can't do with miscellaneous chatter or make a single new acquaintance—look at a solitary new face save that of the wounded soldiers in hospital, whom I see something of and find of a great and touching interest. Yet the general conditions of town I find the only ones I can do with now, and I am more glad than I can say to think of Mrs. Lloyd and her daughters supplanting me, at their ease, at dear old L.H. I rejoice to hear from you of Beau's fine outlook and I send him my aged blessing—as I do to his Father, who must take good comfort of him. I am afraid on the other hand that all these diluvian and otherwise devastated days haven't contributed to the gaiety (I won't say of “nations”—what will have become, forever, of that? but) of golfers pure and simple. I wonder about you much, and very

tenderly, and wish you weren't so far, or my agility so extinct. I find I think with dismay—positive terror—of a station or a train—more than once or twice a year. Bitter moreover the thought to me that you never seem now in the way of coming up. . . .

Goodnight, dear Margaret. Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To the Hon. Evan Charteris.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
Jan. 22, 1915.

My dear Evan,

I am more deeply moved than I can say by the receipt of your so admirably vivid and interesting letter. . . . I envy you intensely your opportunity to apply *that* [spirit of observation] in these immense historic conditions and thus to have had a hand of your own in the most prodigious affirmation of the energy and ingenuity of man ("however misplaced"! ) that surely can ever have been in the world. For God's sake go on taking as many notes of it as you possibly can, and believe with what grateful piety I shall want to go over your treasure with you when you finally bring it home. Such impressions as you must get, such incalculable things as you must see, such unutterable ones as you must feel! Well, keep it all up, and above all keep up that same blest confidence in my fond appreciation. Wonderful your account of that night visit to the trenches and giving me more of the sense and the smell and the fantastic grimness, the general ordered and methodised horror, than anything else whatever that has pretended to enlighten us. With infinite interest

do I take in what you say of the rapidity with which the inside-out-ness of your conditions becomes the matter of course and the platitudinous—which I take partly to result from the tremendous collectivity of the case, doesn't it? the fact of the wholeness of the stress and strain or intimate fusion, as in a common pot, of all exposures, all resistances, all the queerness and all the muchness! But I mustn't seem to put too interrogatively my poor groping speculations. Only wait to correct my mistakes in some better future, and I shall understand you down to the ground. We add day to day here as consciously, or labouringly, as you are doing, no doubt, on your side—it's in fact like lifting every 24 hours, just now, a very dismally dead weight and setting it on top of a pile of such others, already stacked, which promises endlessly to grow—so that the mere reaching up adds all the while to the beastly effort. London is *grey*—in moral tone; and even the Zeppelin bombs of last night at Yarmouth do little to make it flush. What a pitiful horror indeed must that Ypres desolation and desecration be—a baseness of demonism. I find, thank God, that under your image of that I at least *can* flush. It so happens that I dine to-morrow (23d) with John Sargent, or rather I mean lunch, and I shall take for granted your leave to read him your letter. I bless you again for it, and am yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Compton Mackenzie.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
January 23rd, 1915.

My dear Monty,

I am acknowledging your so interesting letter at once ; because I find that under the effect of all our conditions here I can't answer for any postal fluency, however reduced in quality or quantity, at an indefinite future time. My fluency of the moment even, such as it is, has to take the present mechanic form ; but here goes, at any rate, to the extent of my having rejoiced to hear from you, not of much brightness though your news may be. I tenderly condole and participate with you on your having been again flung into bed. Truly the haul on your courage has to keep on being enormous—and I applaud to the echo the wonderful way that virtue in you appears to meet it. You strike me as leading verily the heroic life at a pitch nowhere and by nobody surpassed—even though our whole scene bristles all over with such grand examples of it. Since you are up and at work again may that at least go bravely on—while I marvel again, according to my wont, at your still finding it possible in conditions that I fear would be for me dismally “inhibitive.” I bless your new book, even if you didn't in our last talk leave me with much grasp of what it is to be “about.” In presence of any suchlike intention I find I want a subject to be able quite definitely to state and declare itself—as a subject ; and when the thing is communicated to me (in advance) in the form of So-and-So's doing this, that or the other, or Something-else's “happening” and so on, I



kind of yearn for the expressible idea or motive, what the thing is to be done *for*, to have been presented to me; which you may say perhaps is asking a good deal. I don't think so, if any cognisance at all is vouchsafed one; it is the only thing I in the least care to ask. What the author shall do with his idea I am quite ready to wait for, but am meanwhile in no relation to the work at all unless that basis has been provided. Console yourself, however: dear great George Meredith once began to express to me what a novel he had just started ("One of Our Conquerors") was to be about by no other art than by simply naming to me the half-dozen occurrences, such as they were, that occupied the pages he had already written; so that I remained, I felt, quite without an answer to my respectful inquiry—which he had all the time the very attitude of kindly encouraging and rewarding!

But why do I make these restrictive and invidious observations? I bless your book, and the author's fine hand and brain, whatever it may consist of; and I bend with interest over your remarks about poor speculating and squirming Italy's desperate dilemma. The infusion of that further horror of local devastation and anguish is too sickening for words—I have been able only to avert my face from it; as, if I were nearer, I fear I should but wrap my head in my mantle and give up altogether. The truth is however that the Italian case affects me as on the whole rather *ugly*—failing to see, as one does, their *casus belli*, and having to see, as one also does, that they must hunt up one to give them any sort of countenance at all. I should—

*January 25th.*

I had alas to break off two days ago, having been at that very moment flung into bed, as I am

occasionally liable to [be], somewhat like yourself ; though happily not in the prolonged way. I am up this morning again—though still in rather semi-sickly fashion ; but trying to collect my wits afresh as to what I was going to say about Italy. However, I had perhaps better not say it—as I take, I rather fear, a more detached view of her attitude than I see that, on the spot, you can easily do. By which I mean that I don't much make out how, as regards the two nations with whom [she is in] alliance (originally so unnatural, alas, in the matter of Austria !), she can act in a fashion, any fashion, regardable as *straight*. I always hated her patching up a friendly relation with Austria, and thereby with Germany, as against France and this country ; and now what she publishes is that it *was* good enough for her so long as there was nothing to be got otherwise. If there's anything to be got (by any *other* alliance) she will go in for that ; but she thus gives herself away, as to all her recent past, a bit painfully, doesn't one feel ?—and will do so especially if what she has in mind is to cut in on Turkey and so get ahead, for benefit or booty or whatever, of her very own allies. However, I mustn't speak as if we and ours shouldn't be glad of her help, whatever that help is susceptible of amounting to. The situation is one for not looking a gift-horse in the mouth—which only proves, alas, how *many* hideous and horrible [aspects] such situations have. Personally, I don't see how she can make up her mind not, in spite of all temptations, to remain as still as a mouse. Isn't it rather luridly borne in upon her that the Germans have only to make up their minds ruthlessly to violate Switzerland in order, as they say, “to be at Milan, by the Simplon, the St. Gotthard or whatever, in just ten hours” ? Ugh !—let me not talk of such abominations : I don't know

why I pretend to it or attempt it. I too am trying (I don't know whether I told you) to bury my nose in the doing of something daily; and am finding that, however little I manage on any given occasion, even that little sustains and inflames and rewards me. I lose myself thus in the mystery of what "art" can do for one, even with every blest thing against it. And why it *should* and how it does and what it means—that is "the funny thing"! However, as I just said, one mustn't look a gift-horse etc. So don't yourself so scrutinise *this* poor animal, but believe me yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Miss Elizabeth Norton.*

The "pamphlet" was his appeal on behalf of the American Volunteer Motor-Ambulance, included in *Within the Rim*.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

Jan. 25th, 1915.

Dearest Lily,

It has been of the greatest interest, it has been delightful, to me to receive to-night your so generous and informing letter. The poor little pamphlet for which you "thank" me is a helpless and empty thing—for which I should blush were not the condition of its production so legibly stamped upon it. You can't say things unless you have been out there to learn them, and *if* you have been out there to learn them you can say them less than ever. With all but utterly nothing to go upon I had to make my remarks practically *of* nothing, and that the effect of them can only be nil on a subscribing public which wants constant and particular news of the undertakings it has been asked to believe in

once for all, I can but too readily believe. The case seems different here—I mean on this side of the sea—where scores and scores of such like corps are in operation in France—the number of ambulance-cars is many, many thousand, on all the long line—without its becoming necessary for them that their work should be publicly chronicled. I think the greater nearness—here—the strange and sinister nearness—makes much of the difference; various facts are conveyed by personal—unpublished—report, and these sufficiently serve the purpose. What seems clear, at all events, is that there *is* no devisable means for keeping the enterprise in touch with American sympathy, and I sadly note therefore what you tell me of the inevitable and not distant end. The aid rendered strikes me as having been of the handsomest—as is splendidly the case with all the aid America is rendering, in her own large-handed and full-handed way; of which you tell me such fine interesting things from your own experience. It makes you all seem one vast and prodigious workshop *with* us—for the resources and the energy of production and creation and devotion here are of course beyond estimation. I imagine indeed that, given your more limited relation to the War, your resources in money are more remarkable—even though here (by which I mean in England, for the whole case is I believe more hampered in France) the way the myriad calls and demands are endlessly met and met is prodigious enough. It does my heart good that you should express yourself as you do—though how could you do anything else?—on behalf of the simply sacred cause, as I feel it, of the Allies; for here at least one needs to feel it so to bear up under the close pressure of all that is so hideous and horrible in what has been let loose upon us. Much of the

time one feels that one simply can't—the heart-breaking aspect, the destruction of such masses, on such a scale, of the magnificent young life that was to have been productive and prolific, bears down any faith, any patience, all argument and all hope. I can look at the woe of the bereft, the parents, the mothers and wives, and take it comparatively for granted—that is not care for what they individually suffer (as they seem indifferent themselves, both here and in France, in an extraordinarily noble way.) But the dead loss of such ranks upon ranks of the finest young human material—of life—that is an abyss into which one can simply gaze appalled. And as if that were not enough I find myself sickened to the very soul by the apparent *sense* of the *louche* and sinister figure of Mr. Woodrow Wilson, who seems to be *aware* of nothing but the various ingenious ways in which it is open to him to make difficulties for us. I may not read him right, but most of my correspondents at home appear to, and they minister to my dread of him and the meanness of his note as it breaks into all this heroic air.

But I am writing you in the key of *mere* lamentation—which I didn't mean to do. Strange as it may seem, there are times when I am much uplifted—when what *may* come out of it all seems almost worth it. And then the black nightmare holds the field again—and in fact one proceeds almost wholly by those restless alternations. They consume one's vital substance, but one will perhaps wear them out first. It touches me deeply that you should speak tenderly of dear old London, for which my own affection in these months *s'est accrue* a thousandfold—just as the same has taken place in my attachment for all these so very preponderantly decent and solid people. The race *is* worth fighting for, immensely

—in fact I don't know any other for whom it can so much be said. . . . Well, go on working and feeling and believing for me, dear Lily, and God uphold your right arm and carry far your voice. Think of me too as your poor old aching and yet not altogether collapsing, your in fact quite clinging,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Hugh Walpole.*

Mr. Walpole was now serving with the Red Cross on the Russian front.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
February 14th, 1915.

Dearest Hugh,

“When you write,” you say, and when *do* I write but just exactly an hour after your letter of this evening; that of February 1st, a fortnight ago to a day, has come to hand? I delight in having got it, and find it no less interesting than genial—bristling with fine realities. Much as it tells me, indeed, I could have done with still more; but that is of course always the case at such a time as this, and amid such wonderments and yearnings; and I make gratefully the most of what there is. The basis, the connection, the mode of employment on, and in, and under which you “go off,” for instance, are matters that leave me scratching my head and exhaling long and sad sighs—but as those two things are what I am at in these days most of my time I don't bring them home *most* criminally to you. Only I am moved to beseech you this time not to throw yourself into the thick of military operations amid which your want of even the minimum of proper eyesight apparently

may devote you to destruction, more or less—after the manner of the blind *quart d'heure* described to me in your letter previous to this one. I am sorry the black homesickness so feeds upon you amid your terrific paradoxical friends, the sport alike of their bodies and their souls, of whom your account is admirably vivid; but I well conceive your state, which has my tenderest sympathy—that nostalgic ache at its worst being the invocation of the very devil of devils. Don't let it break the spell of your purpose of learning Russian, of really mastering it—though even while I say this I rather wince at your telling me that you incline not to return to England till September next. I don't put that regret on the score of my loss of the sight of you till then—that gives the sort of personal turn to the matter that we are all ashamed together of giving to any matter now. But the being and the having been in England—or in France, which is now so much the same thing—during at least a part of this unspeakable year affects me as something you are not unlikely to be sorry to have missed; there attaches to it—to the being here—something so sovereign and so initiatory in the way of a British experience. I mean that it's as if you wouldn't have had the full general British experience without it, and that this may be a pity for you as a painter of British phenomena—for I don't suppose you think of reproducing *only* Russian for the rest of your shining days. However, I hasten to add that I feel the very greatest aversion to intermeddlingly advising you—your completing your year in Russia all depends on what you *do* with the precious time. You may bring home fruits by which you will be wholly justified. Address yourself indeed to doing that and putting it absolutely through—and I will, for my part, back you up

unlimitedly. Only, bring your sheaves with you, and gather in a golden bundle of the same. I detest, myself, the fine old British horror—as it has flourished at least up to now, when in respect to the great matter that's upon us the fashion has so much changed—of doing anything consistently and seriously. So if you should draw out your absence I shall believe in your reasons. Meanwhile I am myself of the most flaming British complexion—the whole thing is to me an unspeakably intimate experience—if it isn't abject to apply such a term when one hasn't had one's precious *person* straight up against the facts. I have only had my poor old mind and imagination—but as one *can* have them here; and I live partly in dark abysses and partly in high and, I think, noble elations. But how, at my age and in my conditions, I could have beautifully done without it! I resist more or less—since you ask me to tell you how I “am”; I resist and go on from day to day because I want to and the horrible interest is too great not to. But that same is adding the years in great shovel-fulls to our poor old lives (those at least of my generation :) so don't be too long away after all if you want ever to see me again. I have in a manner got back to work—after a black interregnum; and find it a refuge and a prop—but the conditions make it difficult, exceedingly, almost insuperably, *I* find, in a sense far other than the mere distressing and depressing. The subject-matter of one's effort has become *itself* utterly treacherous and false—its relation to reality utterly given away and smashed. Reality is a world that was to be capable of *this*—and how represent that horrific capability, *historically* latent, historically ahead of it? How on the other hand *not* represent it either—without putting into play mere fiddlesticks?



I had to break off my letter last night from excess of lateness, and now I see I misdated it. To-night is the 15th, the p.m. of a cold grey Sunday such as we find wintry here, in our innocence of your ferocities of climate; to which in your place I should speedily succumb. That buried beneath the polar blizzard and the howling homesick snowdrift you *don't* utterly give way is, I think, a proof of very superior resources and of your being reserved for a big future. . . . Goodnight, however, now really, dearest Hugh. I follow your adventure with all the affectionate solicitude of your all-faithful old

H. J.

*To Mrs. Henry Cabot Lodge.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
February 16th, 1915.

My dear Mrs. Lodge,

It is indeed very horrible that having had the kindest of little letters from you ever so long ago (I won't remind you how long—you may have magnanimously forgotten it a little) I am thanking you for it only at this late day. Explanations are vain things, and yet if I throw myself on the biggest explanation that ever was in the world there may be something in it. . . . Fortunately the interest and the sympathy grow (if things that start at the superlative degree *can* grow), and I never am sick with all the monstrosity of it but I become after a bit almost well with all the virtue and the decency. I try to live in the admiring contemplation of that as much as possible—and I thought I already knew how deeply attached I am to this remarkable country and to the character of its people. I find I haven't known until now the real degree of my

attachment—which I try to show—that is to apply—the intensity of in small and futile ways. To-day for instance I have been taking to my dentist a convalesced soldier—a mere sapper of the R.E.—whom I fished out of a hospital; yesterday I went to the Stores to send “food-chocolate” to my cook’s nephew at the front, Driver Bisset of the Artillery; and at the moment I write I am putting up for the night a young ex-postman from Rye who has come up to pass the doctor tomorrow for the Naval Brigade. These things, as I write them, make me almost feel that I do push before you the inevitability of my silence. But they don’t mean, please, that I am not living very intensively, at the same time, with you all at Washington—where I fondly suppose you all to entertain sentiments, the Senator and yourself, Constance and that admirable Gussy, into which I may enter with the last freedom. I won’t go into the particulars of my sympathy—or at least into the particulars of what it imputes to you: but I have a general sweet confidence, a kind of wealth of divination.

London is of course not gay (thank the Lord;) but I wouldn’t for the world not be here—there are impressions under which I feel it a kind of uplifting privilege. The situation doesn’t make me gregarious—but on the contrary very fastidious about the people I care to see. I know exactly those I don’t, but never have I taken more kindly to those I do—and with *them* intercourse has a fine intimacy that is beyond anything of the past. But we are very mature—and that is part of the harmony—the young and the youngish are *all* away getting killed, so far as they are males; and so far as they are females, wives and fiancées and sisters, they are occupied with being simply beyond praise. The mothers are pure Roman and it’s all tremendously

becoming to every one. There are really no fiancées by the way—the young men get home for three days and are married—then off into the absolute Hell of it again. But good-night now. It was truly exquisite of you to write to me. Do feel, and tell Cabot that I take the liberty of asking *him* to feel, how thoroughly I count on all your house. It's a luxury for me to *know* how I can on Constance. Yours, dear Mrs. Lodge, ever and ever so faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. William James.*

H. J.'s eldest nephew was at this time occupied with relief work in Belgium.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

Feb. 20th, 1915.

Dearest Alice,

. . . Of course our great (family) public fact is Harry's continuously inscrutable and unseizable activity here. "Here" I say, without knowing in the least where he now is—and the torment of his spending all this time on this side of the sea, and of one's utter loss of him in *consequence*, is really quite dreadful. . . . England is splendid, undisturbed and undismayed by the savage fury and the roaring mad-bull "policy" of Germany's mine-and-torpedo practice against all the nations of the earth, or rather of the sea—though of course there will be a certain number of disasters, and it will probably be on neutrals that most of these will fall.

Feb. 22nd, p.m. I had to break this off two nights ago and since then that remark has been signally confirmed—three neutral ships have been sunk by mines and torpedoes, and one of these

we learn this a.m. is an American cargo-boat. I don't suppose anything particular will "happen" for you all with Germany because of this incident alone (the crew were saved;) yet it can hardly improve relations, and she is sure to repeat the injury in some form, promptly, and then the fat will be on the fire. Mr. Roosevelt is far from being dear to me, but I can't *not* agree with his contention that the U.S.'s sitting down in meekness and silence under the German repudiation of every engagement she solemnly took with us, as the initiatory power in the Hague convention, constitutes an unspeakable precedent, and makes us a deplorable figure.

Meanwhile I find it a real uplifting privilege to live in an air so unterrorized as that of this country, and to feel what confidence we insuperably feel in the big *sea-genius*, let alone the huge sea-resources, of this people. It is a great experience. I mean the whole process of life here is now—even if it does so abound in tragedy and pity, such as one can often scarcely face. But there is too much of all that to say—and all I intended was to remark that while Germany roars and runs amuck the new armies now at last ready are being oh so quietly transported across the diabolised Channel. The quiet and the steady going here, amid the German vociferation, is of itself an enormous—I was going to say pleasure. We have just heard from Burgess of the arrival of his regiment at Havre—they left the Tower of London but a few days ago. . . . I go to-morrow to the Protheros to help them with tea-ing a party of convalescent soldiers from hospital—Mrs. J. G. Butcher, like thousands, or at least hundreds, of other people, sends her car on certain afternoons of the week to different hospitals for four of the bettering patients—or as many as will go into it—and they are conveyed

either to her house or to some other arranged with. I have "met" sets of them thus several times—the "right people" are wanted for them, and nothing can be more interesting and admirable and verily charming than I mostly find them. The last time the Protheros had, by Mrs. Butcher's car, wounded Belgians—but to-morrow it is to be British, whom I on the whole prefer, though the Belgians are more *gravely* pathetic. The difficulty about them is that they are so apt to know only Flemish and understand almost no French—save as one of them, always included for the purpose, can interpret. I had to-day to luncheon a most decent and appreciative little sapper in the Engineers, whom I originally found in hospital and whose teeth I have been having done up for him—at very reduced military rates! There is nothing one isn't eager to do for them, and their gratitude for small mercies, excellent stuff as they are, almost wrings the heart. *This* obscure hero (a great athlete in the *running* line) is completely well again and goes in a day or two back to the Front; but oh how they don't like the hellishness of it (*that* is beyond all conception,) and oh how they don't let this make any difference! Tremendously will the "people" by this war—I mean by their patience of it and in it—have made good their place in the sun; though even as one says that one recognizes still more how the "upper classes" in this country and the others have poured themselves unstintedly out. The way "society" at large, in England, has magnificently played up, will have given it, I think it will be found, a new lease of life. However, society, in wars, always does play up—and it is by them, and for them, that the same are mostly made. . . .

Feb. 23rd. Again I had to go to bed, but it's all right and my letter wouldn't in any case have

gone to you till to-morrow's New York post. Meanwhile not much has happened, thank heaven, save that I went to tea with little Fanny P. and her five convalescents, and that it was a very successful affair. . . . We plied them with edibles and torrents of the drinkable and they expanded, as always, and became interesting and moving, in the warmth of civilization and sympathy. Those I had on either side of me at table were men of the old Army—I mean who had been through the Boer War, and were therefore nigh upon forty, and proportionately more *soldatesques*; but there is nothing, ever, that one wouldn't do for any one of them; they become at once such children of history, such creatures of distinction. . . .

Ever your affectionate

HENRY.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Mrs. Wharton, writing to describe a journey she had made along part of the French front, had mentioned that a staff-officer at Ste. Menehould had read some of her books, and had shown his appreciation by facilitating her visit to Verdun.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 5th, 1915.

Dearest Edith,

How can I welcome and applaud enough your splendid thrilling letter—in which, though it gives me your whole spectacle and impression as unspeakably portentous, I find you somehow of the very same heroic *taille* of whatever it was that gave the rest at the monstrous maximum. unutterably envy you these sights and sufferer assaults of the *maxima*—condemned as I am b

doddering age and "mean" infirmity to the poor mesquins *minima*, when really to find myself in closer touch would so fearfully interest and inspire and overwhelm me (as one wants to be overwhelmed.) However, since my ignoble portion is what it is, the next best thing is to heap you on the altar of sacrifice and gloat over *your* overwhelmedness and demand of you to serve me still more and more of it. On this I even insist now that I have tasted of your state and your substance—for your impression is rendered in a degree so vivid and touching that it all (especially those vespers in the church with the tragic beds in the aisles) wrings tears from my aged eyes. What a hungry *luxury* to be able to come back with things and give them then and there straight into the aching voids: do it, *do* it, my blest Edith, for all you're worth: rather, rather—"sauvez, sauvez la France!" Ah, je la sauverais bien, moi, if I hadn't been ruined myself too soon! . . . Ce que c'est for you, evidently, to find yourself in these adventures, like Ouida, "the favourite reading of the military." Well, as I say, do keep in touch with your public! I stupidly forgot to tell Frederick to tell you not to dream of returning me those £6. 0. 0 (all he would take,) but to regard them as the contribution I was really then in the very nick of sending to your Belges! So I *wired* you a day or two ago to that effect, after too much wool-gathering, and to anticipate absolutely any restitution. It made it so *easy* a sending. Well then, à bientôt—Oliver shamelessly (not asks, but) *howls* for more. Yours all devotedlier than ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To the Hon. Evan Charteris.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 13th, 1915.

My dear Evan,

Your letter is of such interest and beauty that I must thank you for it, at once. Little idea can you have of how the sense of your whereabouts, your visions, impressions and contacts, thrills me and makes me wonder, enriches and excites my poor little private life. . . . In short you affect me as gulping down great mugsfuls of experience, while I am sipping that compound out of a liqueur-glass not a quarter full. The only thing I can say to myself is that I can live too, thank God, by my friends' experience, when I hang about them in imagination, as you must take it from me that I do about you. You help me greatly to do so with your account of the souplless return of hospitality to your kind French harbourers that you had been bringing-off—and this in particular by your mention of the admirable aspects they, and all who around you are like them, present to your intelligent English eyes. I rejoice in all expressions and testimonies about the French, wonderful and genial race; all generous appreciation of the way they are carrying themselves now seems to me of the highest international value and importance, and, frankly, I wish more of that found its way into our newspapers here, so prodigiously (even if erratically) copious about our own doings. We ought to commend and commemorate and celebrate them—our Allies' doings—more publicly and explicitly—but the want of imagination hereabouts (save as to that of—to the report of—grand things that haven't happened) is often



almost a painful impression. I find myself really wondering whether people can do without it, succeed without it, as much as that! One meets constant examples of a sort of unpenetrated state which disconcert and rather alarm. However, these remarks are but the fruit of the fact that something stirs in me ever so deeply and gratefully, almost to the point of a pang, at all rendering of justice and homage to the children of France! Go on being charming and responsive to them—it will do *us* good as well as do them. I am sure their (your particular guests') enjoyment of your agitated dinner was exquisite.

Very interesting, not less, your picture of the blest irreflection and absence of morbid analysis in which you are living—in face of all the possibilities; and wondrous enough surely must be all the changes and lapses of importance and value, of sensibility itself, the difference of your relation to things and the drop out of some relations altogether. . . . But I catch in your remarks the silver thread of optimism, not bulging out but subtly gleaming, and it gives me no end of satisfaction. A few gleams have lately been coming to me otherwise, and the action of *Neuve Chapelle* (if I may rashly name it,) which we have reports of in the papers, is I suppose the one you speak of as cheering. The great thing we do in London, however, is to strain our ears for the thunder of the Dardanelles, which we even feel that we get pretty straight and pretty strong, and in which we see consequences the most tremendous, verily beyond all present utterance. Nothing in all the war has made me hang on it in such suspense—though we venture even almost to presume. I see few people—and *try* to see only those I positively want to; whom, par exemple, I value the exchange of earnest remarks with more than ever. But I am ill-conditioned

for "telling" you things—and indeed I should think meanly of London if there *was* very much to tell. A few nights ago I dined with Mervyn O’Gorman, my rather near neighbour here, and met a youngish and exceedingly interesting, in fact charming, Colonel Brancker, just back from the front—both of which high aeronautic experts you probably know. I mention them because I extracted from them so intense a thrill—drawing them out—for they let me—on the subject of the so more and more revealed affinity of the British temperament with that of the conquering airman—and thereby of the extent to which the military, or the energetic, future of this country may be in the air. They put it so splendidly that I went home unspeakably rejoicing (it may "mean" so much!) and as if myself ponderously soaring. But what am I ridiculously remarking to *you*? The great point I wish to make is the lively welcome I shall give you in April—thank you for that knowledge; and that I am all-faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 23rd, 1915.

Chère Madame et Confrère,

Don't imagine for a moment that I don't feel the full horror of my having had to wait till now, when I can avail myself of this aid, to acknowledge, as the poor pale pettifogging term has it, the receipt from you of inexpressibly splendid bounties. I won't attempt to explain

or expatiate—about this abject failure of utterance: the idea of “explaining” anything to *you* in these days, or of any expatiation that isn’t exclusively that of your own genius upon your own adventures and impressions! I think *the* reason why I have been so baffled, in a word, is that all my powers of being anything else have gone to living upon your two magnificent letters, the one from Verdun, and the one after your second visit there; which gave me matter of experience and appropriation to which I have done the fullest honour. Your whole record is sublime, and the interest and the beauty and the terror of it all have again and again called me back to it. I have ventured to share it, for the good of the cause and the glory of the connection (mine,) with two or three select others—this I candidly confess to you—one of whom was dear Howard, absolutely as dear as ever through everything, and whom I all but reduced to floods of tears, tears of understanding and sympathy. I know them at last, your incomparable pages, by heart—and thus it is really that I feel qualified to speak to you of them. With the two sublimities in question, or between them, came of course also the couple of other favours, enclosing me, pressing back upon me, my attempted contribution to your Paris labour: to which perversity I have had to bow my head. I was very sorry to be so forced, but even while cursing and gnashing my teeth I got your post-office order cashed, and the money *is*, God knows, assistingly spendable here! Another pang was your mention of Jean du Breuil’s death. . . . I didn’t know him, had never seen him; but your account of the admirable manner of his end makes one feel that one would like even to have just beheld him. We are in the midst, the very midst, of histories of that sort, miserable and terrible,

here too; the Neuve Chapelle business, from a strange, in the sense of being a pretty false, glamour at first flung about which we are gradually recovering, seems to have taken a hideous toll of officers, and other distressing legends (legends of mistake and confusion) are somehow overgrowing it too. But painful particulars are not what I want to give you—of anything; you are up to your neck in your own, and I had much rather pick my steps to the clear places, so far as there be any such! I continue to try and keep my own existence one, so far as I may—a place clear of the last accablement, I mean: apparently what it comes to is that it's "full up" with the last but one.

*Wednesday, 24th.* I had to break this off yesterday—and it was time, apparently, with the rather dreary note I was sounding: though I don't know that I have a very larky one to go on with to-day—save so far as the taking of the big Austrian fortress, which I can neither write nor pronounce, makes one a little soar and sing. This seems really to represent something, but how much I put forth not the slightest pretension to measure. In fact I think I am not measuring anything whatever just now, and not pretending to—I find myself, much more, quite consentingly dumb in the presence of the boundless enormity; and when I wish to give myself the best possible account of this state of mind I call it the pious attitude of waiting. Verily there is much to wait for—but there I am at it again, and should blush to offer you in the midst of what I believe to be your more grandly attuned state, such a pale apology for a living faith. Probably all that's the matter with one is one's vicious propensity to go on feeling more and more, instead of less and less—which would be so infinitely more convenient; for the former

course puts one really quite out of relation to almost everybody else and causes one to circle helplessly round outer social edges like a kind of prowling pariah. However, I try to be as stupid as I can. . . .

All the while, with this, I am not expressing my deep appreciation of your generous remarks about again placing Frederick at my disposition. I am doing perfectly well in these conditions without a servant; my life is so simplified that all acuteness of need has been abated; in short I manage—and it is of course fortunate, inasmuch as the question would otherwise not be at all practically soluble. No young man of military age would I for a moment consider—and in fact there *are* none about, putting aside the physically inapt (for the Army)—and these are kept tight hold of by those who can use them. Small boys and aged men are alone available—but the matter has in short not the least importance. The thing that most assuages me continues to be dealing with the wounded in such scant measure as I may; such, e.g., as my having turned into Victoria Station, yesterday afternoon, to buy an evening paper and there been so struck with the bad lameness of a poor hobbling khaki convalescent that I inquired of him to such sympathetic effect that, by what I can make out, I must have committed myself to the support of him for the remainder of his days—a trifle on account having sealed the compact on the spot. It all helps, however—helps *me*; which is so much what I do it for. Let it help *you* by ricochet, even a little too. . . .

. . . Good-bye for now, and believe me, less gracelessly and faithlessly than you might well, your would-be so decent old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Thomas Sergeant Perry.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 27th, 1915.

My dear Thomas and my dear Lilla :

Don't resent please the economic form of this address, the frugal attempt to make one grateful acknowledgment serve for both of you : for I think that if you were just now on this scene itself there isn't a shade of anxious simplification that you wouldn't at once perfectly grasp. The effect of the biggest and most appalling complication the world has ever known is somehow, paradoxically, as we used to say at Newport, an effect of simplification too—producing, that is, a desperate need for the same, in all sorts of ways, lest one be submerged by the monster of a myriad bristles. In short you do understand of course, and how it is that I should be invidiously writing to *you*, Lilla, in response to your refreshing favour of some little time since (the good one about your having shrieked Rule Britannia at somebody's lecture, or at least done something quite as vociferous and to the point, and quite as helpful to our sacred cause). This exclusive benefit should you be enjoying, I say, hadn't a most beneficial letter from Thomas come to me but yesterday, crowning the edifice of a series of suchlike bounties which he has been so patient over my poor old inevitable silence about. . . .

You inflame me so scarcely less, Thomas, with your wonderful statistics of the American theatre of my infancy, à propos of my printed prattle about it, that I could almost find it in me to inquire from what published source it is you

recover the ghostly little facts. Are they presented in some procurable volume that it would be possible to send me? I ask with a queer dim feeling that they might, or the fingered volume might, operate as a blest little diversion from our eternal obsession here. I have reached the point now, after eight months of that oppression, of cultivating small arts of escape, small plunges into oblivion and dissimulation; in fact I am able to read again—for ever so long this power was almost blighted—and to want to become as dissociated as possible from the present.

. . . However, I didn't mean to be black—but only pearly grey, as your letter so benevolently incites: yours too, Lilla, for I keep you together in all this. And I don't, you see, pretend to treat you to any scrap of information whatever—you have more of the public, of a hundred sorts, than we, I guess: and the private mostly turns out, in these parts, to go but on one leg, after the first fond glimpse of it. I lunched yesterday with the Prime Minister, on the chance of catching some gleam between the chinks—which was idiotic of me, because it's mostly in those circles that the chinks are well puttied over. The nearest I came to any such was through my being told by a member of the P.M.'s family, whom I wouldn't enable you to identify for the world, that she had heard him just before luncheon say to three or four members of the Government, and even Cabinet, gathered at the house, that something-or-other was "the most awkward situation he had ever found himself up against": with the comment that she, my informant, was in liveliest suspense to know what it was he had alluded to in those portentous terms. Which I give, however, but as a specimen of the *bouché* chink, not of the

gaping; the admirable (as I think him, quite affectionately think him) Master of the Situation having presently joined us in the most unmistakable serenity of strength and cheer, and the riddle remaining at any rate without the least pretence of, or for that matter need of, a key. It will be a hundred years old by the time my small anecdote reaches you, and not have *le moindre rapport* to anything that in the least concerns us *then*. But I must tear myself from you, and try withal to close on some sublime note—a large choice of which sort I feel we are for that matter perfectly possessed of. Well, then, a friend of much veracity told me a couple of days since that a friend of his (I admit that it's always a friend of somebody else's,) an officer of the upper command, just over for a couple of days from the Front, had spoken to him of the now enormous mass of the French and British troops fronting the enemy as covering, in dense gatheredness together, 40 miles of the land of France—I don't mean in length of front, of course, which would be nothing, but in rearward extent and just standing, so to speak, in close-packed available spatial presence. But there I am at an item—and I abjure items, they defy all dealing with, and am your affectionate old

HENRY JAMES.



*To Edward Marsh.*

A copy of this letter was sent by Mr. Marsh to Rupert Brooke, then with the Dardanelles Expeditionary Force; it reached him two days before his death. The letter refers of course to his "1914" Sonnets. The line criticised in the first sonnet is: "And the worst friend and enemy is but death."

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 28th, 1915.

Dear admirable Eddie!

I take it very kindly indeed of you to have found thought and time to send me the publication with the five brave sonnets. The circumstances (so to call the unspeakable matter) that have conduced to them, and that, taken together, seem to make a sort of huge brazen lap for their congruous beauty, have caused me to read them with an emotion that somehow precludes the critical measure, deprecates the detachment involved in that, and makes me just want—oh so exceedingly much—to be moved by them and to "like" and admire them. So I do greet them gladly, and am right consentingly struck with their happy force and truth: they seem to me to have *come*, in a fine high beauty and sincerity (though not in every line with an equal *degree* of those—which indeed is a rare case anywhere;) and this evening, alone by my lamp, I have been reading them over and over to myself aloud, as if fondly to test and truly to try them; almost in fact as if to reach the far-off author, in whatever unimaginable conditions, by some miraculous, some telepathic intimation that I am in quavering communion with him. Well, they have borne the test with almost all the firm perfection, or straight inevitability, that one

must find in a sonnet, and beside their poetic strength they draw a wondrous weight from his having had the *right* to produce them, as it were, and their rising out of such rare realities of experience. Splendid Rupert—to be the soldier that could beget them on the Muse! and lucky Muse, not less, who could have an affair with a soldier and yet feel herself not guilty of the least deviation! In order of felicity I think Sonnet I comes first, save for a small matter that (perhaps superfluously) troubles me and that I will presently speak of. I place next III, with its splendid first line; and then V (“In that rich earth a richer dust concealed!”) and then II. I don’t speak of No. IV—I think it the least fortunate (in spite of “Touched flowers and furs, and cheeks!”) But the four happy ones are very noble and sound and round, to my sense, and I take off my hat to them, and to their author, in the most marked manner. There are many things one likes, simply, and then there are things one likes to like (or at least that I do;) and these are of that order. My reserve on No. I bears on the last line—to the extent, I mean, of not feeling happy about that *but* before the last word. It may be fatuous, but I am wondering if this line mightn’t have acquitted itself better as: “And the worst friend and foe is only death.” There is an “only” in the preceding line, but the repetition is—or would be—to me not only not objectionable, but would have positive merit. My only other wince is over the “given” and “heaven” rhyme at the end of V; it has been so inordinately vulgarized that I don’t think it good enough company for the rest of the sonnet, which without it I think I would have put second in order instead of the III. The kind of idea it embodies is one that always so fetches *this* poor old Anglomaniac. But that is all—and this,

my dear Eddie, is all. Don't dream of acknowledging these remarks in all your strain and stress—that you should think I could bear that would fill me with horror. The only sign I want is that if you should be able to write to Rupert, which I don't doubt you on occasion manage, you would tell him of my pleasure and my pride. If he should be at all touched by this it would infinitely touch *me*. In fact, should you care to send him on this sprawl, that would save you other trouble, and I would risk his impatience. I think of him quite inordinately, and not less so of you, my dear Eddie, and am yours all faithfully and gratefully,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I have been again reading out V, to myself (I read them very well), and find I *don't* so much mind that blighted balance!

*To Edward Marsh.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
March 30th, 1915.

My dear Eddie,

After my acknowledgment of the beautiful things had gone to you, came in your note, and now your quite blessed letter. So I call it because it testified to my having so happily given you that particular pleasure which is the finest, I think, one can feel—the joy in short that you allude to and that I myself rejoice in your taking. Splendid Rupert indeed—and splendid *you*, in the generosity of your emotion!

I had stupidly overlooked that preliminary lyric, with its so charming climax of an image.

But I think—if you won't feel me over-contentious for it—that your reasoning à propos of "heaven, given" &c. rather halts as to the matter of rhyme and sense, or in other words sense and poetic expression. Note well that, poetically speaking, it's not the sense that's the expression, the "rhyme" or whatever, but those things that are the sense, and that they so far betray it when they find for the "only" words any but the ideally right or the (so to speak) quietly proud. However, I didn't mean to plunge into these depths—there are too many other depths now; I only meant to tell you how I participate and to be yours, in this, all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Mrs. Wharton.*

Lieut. Jean du Breuil de St. Germain, distinguished cavalry officer, sociologist, traveller, was killed in action near Arras, February 22, 1915.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
April 3rd, 1915.

Dearest Edith,

Bounties unacknowledged and unmeasured continue to flow in from you, for this a.m., after your beautiful letter enclosing your copy of M. Séguier's so extraordinarily fine and touching one, arrive your two *livraisons* of the *Revue* containing the Dixmude of which you wrote me. It is quite heartbreakingly noble of you to find initiative for the rendering and the remembering of such services and such assurances, for I myself gaze at almost *any* display of initiative as I should stare at a passing charge of cavalry down the Brompton Road—where we haven't come to that yet, though we may for one reason and

another indeed soon have to. One is surrounded in fact here with more affirmations of energy than you might gather from some of the accounts of matters that appear in the *Times*, and yet the paralysis of my own power to do anything but increasingly and inordinately *feel*, feel in a way to make communication with almost all others impossible, they living and thinking in such different terms—and yet that paralysis, *dis-je*, more and more swallows up everything but the sore and sterile unresting imagination. I can't proceed upon it after your sublime fashion—and in fact its aching life is a practical destruction of every other sort, which is why I call it sterile. But the extent, all the same, to which one will have inwardly and darkly and drearily and dreadfully lived!—with those victims of nervous horror in the ambulance-church, the little chanting country church of the deadly serried beds of your Verdun letter, and those others, the lacerated and untended in the “fetid stable-heat” of the other place and the second letter—all of whom live *with* me and haunt and “inhibit” me. And so does your friend du Breuil, and *his* friend your admirable correspondent (in what a nobleness and blest adequacy of expression their feeling finds relief)—and this in spite of my having neither known nor seen either of them; Séguier creating in one to positive sickness the personal pang about your friend and his, and his letter making me feel the horror it does himself, even as if my affection had something at stake in that. But I don't know why I treat you thus to the detail of one's perpetually-renewed waste. You will have plenty of detail of your own, little waste as I see you allowing yourself.

I haven't yet had the hour of reading your Dixmudes, which I am momentarily reserving,

under some other pressure, but they shall not miss my fond care—so little has any face of the nightmare been reflected for me in any form of beauty as yet; your Verdun letter excepted. This keeps making mere blue-books and yellow-books and rapports the only reading that isn't, or that hasn't been, below the level; through their not pretending to express but only giving one the material. As it happens, when your *Revues* came I was reading Georges Ohnet and in one of the three fascicules of his *Bourgeois de Paris* that have alone, as yet, turned up here! and reading him, *ma foi*, with deep submission to his spell! Funny enough to be redevable at this time of day to that genius, who has come down from the cross where poor vanquished Jules Lemaitre long ago nailed him up, as if to work fresh miracles, dancing for it on Jules's very grave. But he is in fact extraordinarily vivid and candid and amusing, with the force of an angry little hunchback and a perfect and quite gratifying vulgarity of passion; also, probably, with a perfect enormity of *vente*—in which one takes pleasure.

Easter has operated to clear London in something like the fine old way—we would really seem to stick so much to our fine old ways. I don't truly know what to make of some of them—and yet don't let yourself suppose from some of such appearances that the stiffness and toughness of the country isn't on the whole deeper than anything else. Such at least is my own indefeasible conviction—or impression. It's the queerest of peoples—with its merits and defects so extraordinarily parts of each other; its wantonness of refusals—in some of these present ways—such a part of its attachment to freedom, of the individualism which makes its force that of a collection of individuals and its voluntarism

of such a strong quality. But it won't be the defects, it will be the merits, I believe, that will have the last word. Strange that the country should need a still bigger convulsion—for itself; it does, however, and it will get it—and will act under it. France has had hers in the form of invasion—and I don't know of what form ours will yet have to be. But it will come—and then *we* shall—damp and dense, but not vicious, not vicious *enough*, and immensely capable if we can once get *dry*. *Voilà* that *I* am, however; yet with it so yours,

H. J.

*To Edward Marsh.*

Rupert Brooke died on a French hospital-ship in the Aegean Sea, April 23, 1915, while serving with the Royal Naval Division.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
April 24th, 1915.

My dear dear Eddie,

This is too horrible and heart-breaking. If there was a stupid and hideous disfigurement of life and outrage to beauty left for our awful conditions to perpetrate, those things have been now supremely achieved, and no other brutal blow in the private sphere can better them for making one just stare through one's tears. One had thought of one's self as advised and stiffened as to what was possible, but one sees (or at least I feel) how sneakingly one had clung to the idea of the happy, the favouring, hazard, the dream of what still might be for the days to come. But why do I speak of my pang, as if it had a right to breathe in presence of yours?—which makes me think of you with the last tenderness

of understanding. I value extraordinarily having seen him here in the happiest way (in Downing St., &c.) two or three times before he left England, and I measure by that the treasure of your own memories and the dead weight of your own loss. What a price and a refinement of beauty and poetry it gives to those splendid sonnets—which will enrich our whole collective consciousness. We must speak further and better, but meanwhile all my impulse is to tell you to entertain the pang and taste the bitterness for all they are “worth”—to know to the fullest extent what has happened to you and not miss one of the hard ways in which it will come home. You won't have again any relation of that beauty, won't know again that mixture of the elements that made him. And he was the breathing beneficent man—and now turned to this! But there's something to keep too—his legend and his image will hold. Believe by how much I am, my dear Eddie, more than ever yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To G. W. Prothero.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

April 24th, 1915.

Dear George,

I can't not thank you for your interesting remittances, the one about the Salubrity of the Soldier perhaps in particular. That paper is indeed an admirable statement of what one is mainly struck with—the only at all consoling thing in all the actual horror, namely: the splendid personal condition of the khaki-clad as they overflow the town. It represents a



kind of physical *redemption*—and that is something, is much, so long as the individual case of it lasts.

As for the President, he is really looking up. I feel as if it kind of made everything else do so! It does at any rate your all-faithful old

HENRY JAMES.

*To Wilfred Sheridan.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

May 31st, 1915.

My dear dear Wilfred,

I have been hearing from Clare and Margaret, and writing to them—with the effect on my feelings so great that even if I hadn't got their leave to address you thus directly, and their impression that you would probably have patience with me, I should still be perpetrating this act, from the simple force of—well, let me say of fond affection and have done with it. I really take as much interest in your movements and doings, in all your conditions, as if I were Margaret herself—such great analogies prevail between the heavy uncle and the infant daughter when following their object up is concerned. I haven't kept my thoughts off you at all—not indeed that I have tried!—since those days early in the winter, in that little London house, where you were so admirably interesting and vivid about your first initiations and impressions and I pressed you so hard over the whole ground, and didn't know whether most to feel your acute intelligence at play or your kindness to your poor old gaping visitor. I've neglected no opportunity of news of you since then, though I've picked the article up in every and any way save

by writing to you—which my respect for your worried attention and general overstrain forbade me to regard as a decent act. At the same time, when I heard of your having, at Crowborough or wherever, a sharp illness of some duration, I turned really sick myself for sympathy—I couldn't see the faintest propriety in that. And now my sentiments hover about you with the closest fidelity, and when I think of the stiff experience and all the strange initiations (so to express my sense of them) that must have crowded upon you, I am lost in awe at the vision. For you're the kind of defender of his country to whom I take off my hat most abjectly and utterly—the thinking, feeling, refining hero, who knows and compares, and winces and overcomes, and on whose lips I promise myself one of these days to hang again with a gape even beyond that of last winter. I wish to goodness I could do something more and better for you than merely address you these vain words; however, they won't hurt you at least, for they carry with them an intensity of good will. I won't pretend to give you any news, for it's you who make all ours—and we are now really in the way, I think, of doing everything conceivable to back you up in that, and thereby become worthy of you. America, my huge queer country, is being flouted by Germany in a manner that looks more and more like a malignant design, and if this should (very soon) truly appear, and that weight of consequent prodigious resentment should be able to do nothing else than throw itself into the scale, then we should be backing you up to some purpose. The weight would in one way and another be overwhelming. But these are vast issues, and I have only wanted to give you for the moment my devotedest personal blessing. Think of me as in the closest sustaining com-

munion with Clare, and don't for a moment dream that I propose—I mean presume—to lay upon you the smallest burden of notice of the present beyond just letting it remind you of the fond faith of yours, my dear Wilfred, all affectionately,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edward Marsh.*

The volume sent by Mr. Marsh was Rupert Brooke's *1914 and other Poems*.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

June 6th, 1915.

Dearest Eddie,

I thank you ever so kindly for this advance copy of Rupert's volume, which you were right (and blest!) in feeling that I should intensely prize. I have been spending unspeakable hours over it—heart-breaking ones, under the sense of the stupid extinction of so exquisite an instrument and so exquisite a being. Immense the generosity of his response to life and the beauty and variety of the forms in which it broke out, and of which these further things are such an enriching exhibition. His place is now very high and very safe—even though one walks round and round it with the aching soreness of having to take the monument for the man. It's so wretched talking, really, of any "place" but his place *with* us, and in our eyes and affection most of all, the other being such as could wait, and grow with all confidence and power *while* waiting. He has something, at any rate, one feels in this volume, that puts him singularly apart even in his eminence—the fact that, member of the true high company as he is and poet of the strong

wings (for he seems to me extraordinarily strong,) he has *charm* in a way and of a kind that belong to none of the others, who have their beauty and abundance, their distinction and force and grace, whatever it may be, but haven't that particular thing as he has it and as he was going to keep on having it, since it was of his very nature—by which I mean that of his genius. The point is that I think he would still have had it even if he had grown bigger and bigger, and stronger and stronger (for this is what he *would* have done,) and thereby been almost alone in this idiosyncrasy. Even of Keats I don't feel myself saying that he had charm—it's all lost in the degree of beauty, which somehow allows it no chance. But in Rupert (not that I match them!) there is the beauty, so great, and then the charm, different and playing beside it and savouring of the very quality of the man. What it comes to, I suppose, is that he touches me most when he is whimsical and personal, even at the poetic pitch, or in the poetic purity, as he perpetually is. And he penetrates me most when he is most hauntingly (or hauntedly) English—he draws such a real magic from his conscious reference to it. He is extraordinarily so even in the War sonnets—not that that isn't highly natural too; and the reading of these higher things over now, which one had first read while he was still there to be exquisitely at stake in them, so to speak, is a sort of refinement both of admiration and of anguish. The present gives them such sincerity—as if they had wanted it! I adore the ironic and familiar things, the most intimately English—the Chilterns and the Great Lover (towards the close of which I recognise the misprint you speak of, but fortunately so obvious a one—the more flagrant the better—that you needn't worry :) and the Funeral of Youth,

awfully charming; and of course Grantchester, which is booked for immortality. I revel in Grantchester—and how it would have made one love him if one hadn't known him. As it is it wrings the heart! And yet after all what do they do, all of them together, but again express how life had been wonderful and crowded and fortunate and exquisite for him?—with his sensibilities all so exposed, really exposed, and yet never taking the least real harm. He seems to me to have had in his short life so much that one may almost call it everything. And he isn't tragic now—he has only stopped. It's we who are tragic—you and his mother especially, and whatever others; for we can't stop, and we wish we could. The portrait has extreme beauty, but is somehow disconnected. However, great beauty does disconnect! But good-night—with the lively sense that I *must* see you again before I leave town—which won't be, though, before early in July. I hope you are having less particular strain and stress and am yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edward Marsh.*

This refers to a photograph of Rupert Brooke, sent by Mr. Marsh, and to the death of his friend Denis Browne, who was with R. B. when he died. A letter from Browne, describing Rupert Brooke's burial on the island of Scyros, had been read to H. J. by Mr. Marsh the day before the following was written.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 13th, 1915.

Dearest Eddie,

The photograph is wonderful and beautiful—and a mockery! I mean encompassed with such an ache and such a pang that it sets up for

one's vision a regularly accepted, unabated pain. And now *you* have another of like sort, the fruit of this horrible time—which I presume almost to share with you, as a sign of the tenderness I bear you. I wish indeed that for this I might once have *seen* D. B., kind brothering D. B., the reading by you of whose letter last night, under the pang of *his* extinction, the ghost telling of the ghost, moved me more than I could find words for. He brothered you almost as much as he had brothered Rupert—and I could almost feel that he practically a little brothered poor old *me*, for which I so thank his spirit! And this now the end of his brothering! Of anything more in his later letter that had any *relation* you will perhaps still some day tell me. . . .

Yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Compton Mackenzie.*

Mr. Mackenzie was at this time attached to Sir Ian Hamilton's headquarters with the Dardanelles Expeditionary Force.

21 Carlyle Mansions,

Cheyne Walk, S.W.

June 18th, 1915.

My dear Monty,

All this while have I remained shamefully in your debt for interesting news, and I am plunged deeper into that condition by your admirable report from the Dardanelles in this a.m.'s Times. I am a backward being, alas, in these days when so much is forward; our public anxieties somehow strike for me at the roots of letter-writing, and I remain too often dumb, not because I am not thinking and feeling a thousand things, but exactly because I am doing

so to such intensity. You wrote me weeks ago that you had finished your new novel—which information took my breath away (I mean by its windlike rush)—and now has come thus much of the remainder of the adventure for which that so grandly liberated you and which I follow with the liveliest participation in all your splendid sense of it and profit of it. I confess I take an enormous pleasure in the fact of the exposure of the sensitive plate of your imagination, your tremendous attention, to all these wonderful and terrible things. What impressions you are getting, verily—and what a breach must it all not make with the course of history you are practising up to the very eve. I rejoice that you finished and snipped off, or tucked in and wound up, something self-contained there—for how could you ever go back to it if you hadn't?—under that violence of rupture with the past which makes me ask myself what will have become of all that material we were taking for granted, and which now lies there behind us like some vast damaged cargo dumped upon a dock and unfit for human purchase or consumption. I seem to fear that I shall find myself seeing your recently concluded novel as through a glass darkly—which, however, will not prevent my immediately falling upon it when it appears; as I assume, however, that it is not now likely to do before the summer's end—by which time God knows what other monstrous chapters of history won't have been perpetrated! What I most want to say to you, I think, is that I rejoice for you with all my heart in that assurance of health which has enabled you so to gird yourself and go forth. If the torrid south has always been good for you there must be no amount of it that you are now not getting—though I am naturally reduced, you see, to quite abjectly helpless and incompetent

supposition. I hang about you at any rate with all sorts of vows and benedictions. I feel that I mustn't make remarks about the colossal undertaking you are engaged in beyond saying that I believe with all my heart in the final power of your push. As for our news here the gist of that is that we are living with our eyes on you and more and more materially backing you. My comment on you is feeble, but my faith absolute, and I am, my dear Monty, your more than ever faithful old

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I have your address, of many integuments, from your mother, but feel rather that my mountain of envelopes should give birth to a livelier mouse!

*To Henry James, junior.*

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 24th, 1915.

Dearest Harry,

I am writing to you in this fashion even although I am writing you "intimately"; because I am not at the present moment in very good form for any free play of hand, and this machinery helps me so much when there is any question of pressure and promptitude, or above all of particular clearness. That *is* the case at present—at least I feel I ought to lose no more time.

You will wonder what these rather portentous words refer to—but don't be too much alarmed! It is only that my feeling about my situation here has under the stress of events come so much to a head that, certain particular matters further



contributing, I have arranged to seek technical (legal) advice no longer hence than this afternoon as to the exact *modus operandi* of my becoming naturalised in this country. This state of mind probably won't at all surprise you, however; and I think I can assure you that it certainly wouldn't if you were now on the scene here with me and had the near vision of all the circumstances. My sense of how everything more and more makes for it has been gathering force ever since the war broke out, and I have thus waited nearly a whole year; but my feeling has become acute with the information that I can only go down to Lamb House now on the footing of an Alien under Police supervision—an alien friend of course, which is a very different thing from an alien enemy, but still a definite technical outsider to the whole situation here, in which my affections and my loyalty are so intensely engaged. I feel that if I take this step I shall simply rectify a position that has become inconveniently and uncomfortably false, making my civil status merely agree not only with my moral, but with my material as well, in every kind of way. Hadn't it been for the War I should certainly have gone on as I was, taking it as the simplest and easiest and even friendliest thing: but the circumstances are utterly altered now, and to feel with the country and the cause as absolutely and ardently as I feel, and not offer them my moral support with a perfect consistency (my material is too small a matter), affects me as standing off or wandering loose in a detachment of no great dignity. I have spent here all the best years of my life—they practically have *been* my life: about a twelvemonth hence I shall have been domiciled uninterruptedly in England for forty years, and there is not the least possibility, at my age, and in my state of health,

of my ever returning to the U.S. or taking up any relation with it as a country. My practical relation has been to this one for ever so long, and now my "spiritual" or "sentimental" quite ideally matches it. I am telling you all this because I can't not want exceedingly to take you into my confidence about it—but again I feel pretty certain that you will understand me too well for any great number of words more to be needed. The real truth is that in a matter of this kind, under such extraordinarily special circumstances, one's own intimate feeling must speak and determine the case. Well, without haste and without rest, mine has done so, and with the prospect of what I have called the rectification, a sense of great relief, a great lapse of awkwardness, supervenes.

I think that even if by chance your so judicious mind should be disposed to suggest any reserves—I think, I say, that I should then still ask you not to launch them at me unless they should seem to you so important as to balance against my own argument and, frankly speaking, my own absolute need and passion here; which the whole experience of the past year has made quite unspeakably final. I can't imagine at all what these objections should be, however—my whole long relation to the country having been what it is. Regard my proceeding as a simple act and offering of allegiance and devotion, recognition and gratitude (for long years and innumerable relations that have meant so much to me,) and it remains perfectly simple. Let me repeat that I feel sure I shouldn't in the least have come to it without this convulsion, but one is *in* the convulsion (I wouldn't be out of it either!) and one must act accordingly. I feel all the while too that the tide of American identity of consciousness with our own, about the whole matter,

risers and rises, and will rise still more before it rests again—so that every day the difference of situation diminishes and the immense fund of common sentiment increases. However, I haven't really meant so much to expatiate. What I am doing this afternoon is, I think, simply to get exact information—though I am already sufficiently aware of the question to know that after my long existence here the process of naturalisation is very simple and short. . . . My last word about the matter, at any rate, has to be that my decision is absolutely tied up with my innermost personal feeling. I think that will only make you glad, however, and I add nothing more now but that I am your all-affectionate old Uncle,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

H. J.'s four sponsors at his naturalisation were Mr. Asquith, Mr. Gosse, Mr. J. B. Pinker, and Mr. G. W. Prothero.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

June 25th, 1915.

My dear Gosse,

Remarkably enough, I should be writing you this evening even if I hadn't received your interesting information about——, concerning whom nothing perversely base and publicly pernicious at all surprises me. He is the cleverest idiot and the most pernicious talent imaginable, and I wait to see if he won't somehow swing—!

But il ne s'agit pas de ça ; il s'agit of the fact that there is a matter I should have liked to speak to you of the other day when you lunched here, yet hung fire about through its not having then absolutely come to a head. It has within these days done so, and in brief it is *this*. The force

of the public situation now at last determines me to testify to my attachment to this country, my fond domicile for nearly forty years (forty *next* year,) by applying for naturalisation here: the throwing of my imponderable moral weight into the scale of her fortune is the *geste* that will best express my devotion—absolutely nothing *else* will. Therefore my mind is made up, and you are the first person save my Solicitor (whom I have had to consult) to whom the fact has been imparted. Kindly respect for the moment the privacy of it. I learned with horror just lately that if I go down into Sussex (for two or three months of Rye) I have at once to register myself there as an Alien and place myself under the observation of the Police. But that is only the *occasion* of my decision—it's not in the least the cause. The disposition itself has haunted me as Wordsworth's sounding cataract haunted *him*—"like a passion"—ever since the beginning of the War. But the point, please, is this: that the process for me is really of the simplest, and *may* be very rapid, if I can obtain four honourable householders to testify to their knowledge of me as a respectable person, "speaking and writing English decently" etc. Will you give me the great pleasure of being one of them?—signing a paper to that effect? I should take it ever so kindly. And I should further take kindly your giving me if possible your sense on *this* delicate point. Should you say that our admirable friend the Prime Minister would perhaps be approachable by me as another of the signatory four?—to whom, you see, great historic honour, not to say immortality, as my sponsors, will accrue. I don't like to approach him without your so qualified sense of the matter first—and he has always been so beautifully kind and charming to me. I will do nothing till I hear

from you—but his signature (which my solicitor's representative, if not himself, would simply wait upon him for) would enormously accelerate the putting through of the application and the disburdening me of the Sussex "restricted area" alienship—which it distresses me to carry on my back a day longer than I need. I have in mind my other two sponsors, but if I could have from you, in addition to your own personal response, on which my hopes are so founded, your ingenious prefiguration (fed by your intimacy with him) as to how the P.M. would "take" my appeal, you would increase the obligations of yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To J. B. Pinker.*

The two articles here referred to, "The Long Wards" and "Within the Rim," were both eventually devoted to charitable purposes.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
June 29th, 1915.

My dear Pinker,

I am glad to hear from you of the conditions in which the New York Tribune representative thinks there will be no difficulty over the fee for the article. I have in point of fact during the last three or four days considerably written one—concerning which a question comes up which I hope you won't think too tiresome. Making up my mind that something as concrete and "human" as possible would be my best card to play, I have done something about the British soldier, his aspect, temper and tone, and the considerations he suggests, *as I have seen him since the beginning of the war in Hospital*; where I have in fact largely and constantly seen him. The theme lends itself, by my sense, much; and

I dare say I should have it rather to myself—though of course there is no telling! But what I have been feeling in the connection—having now done upwards of 3000 words—is that I should be very grateful for leave to make them 4000 (without of course extension of fee.) I have never been good for the mere snippet, and there is so much to say and to feel! Would you mind asking her, in reporting to her of what my subject is, whether this extra thousand would incommode them. If she really objects to it I think I shall be then disposed to ask you to make some *other* application of my little paper (on the 4000 basis;) in which case I should propose to the Tribune another idea, keeping it down absolutely to the 3000. (I'm afraid I can't do less than that.) My motive would probably in that case be a quite different and less "concrete" thing; namely, the expression of my sense of the way the Briton in general feels about his insulation, and his being in it and of it, even through all this unprecedented stress. It would amount to a statement or picture of his sense of the way his sea-genius has always encircled and protected him, striking deep into his blood and his bones; so that any reconsideration of his position in a new light inevitably comes hard to him, and yet makes the process the effective development of which it is interesting to watch. I should call this thing something like "The New Vision," or, better still, simply "Insulation": though I don't say *exactly* that. At all events I should be able to make something interesting of it, and it would of course inevitably take the sympathetic turn. But I would *rather* keep to the thing I have been trying, if I may have the small extra space. . . .

Believe me yours ever,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Frederic Harrison.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

July 3rd, 1915.

My dear Frederic Harrison,

I think your so interesting letter of the other day most kind and generous—it has greatly touched me. Mrs. Harrison had written me a short time before, even more movingly, and with equal liberality, and I feel my belated remembrance of you magnificently recognised. This has been a most healing fact for me in a lacerated world. How splendid your courage and activity and power, so continued, of production and attention! I am sorry to say I find any such power in myself much impaired and diminished—reduced to the shadow of what it once was. All relations are dislocated and harmonies falsified, and one asks one's self of what use, in such a general condition, is any direction of the mind save straight to the thing that most and only matters. However, it all comes back to that, and one does what one can because it's a *part* of virtue. Also I find one is the better for every successful effort to bring one's attention *home*. I have just read your "English" review of Lord Eversley's book on Poland, which you have made me desire at once to get and read—even though your vivid summary makes me also falter before the hideous old tragedy over which the actual horrors are being re-embroidered. I thank you further for letting me know of your paper in the Aberdeen magazine—though on reflection I can wait for it if it's to be included in your volume now so soon to appear—I shall so straightly possess myself of that. As to the U.S.A., I am afraid I suffer almost more than I

can endure from the terms of precautionary "friendship" on which my country is content to remain with the author of such systematic abominations—I cover my head with my mantle in presence of so much wordy amicable discussing and conversing and reassuring and postponing, all the while that such hideous evil and cruelty rages. To drag into our European miseries any nation that is so fortunate as to be out of them, and able to remain out with common self-respect, would be a deplorable wish—but that holds true but up to a certain line of compromise. I can't help feeling that for the U.S. this line has been crossed, and that they have themselves great dangers, from the source of all ours, to reckon with. However, one fortunately hasn't to decide the case or appoint the hour—the relation between the two countries affects me as being on a stiff downward slope at the bottom of which is rupture, and *everything* that takes place between them renders that incline more rapid and shoves the position further down. The material and moral weight that America would be able to throw into the scale by her productive and financial power strikes me as enormous. There would be no question of munitions then. What I mean is that I believe the truculence of Germany may be trusted, from one month or one week to another now, to force the American hand. It must indeed be helpful to both of you to breathe your fine air of the heights. The atmosphere of London just now is not positively tonic; but one must *find* a tone, and I am, with more faithful thought of Mrs. Harrison than I can express, your and her affectionate old friend,

HENRY JAMES.



*To H. G. Wells.*

H. J. was always inclined to be impatient of the art of parody. The following refers to an example of it in Mr. Wells's volume, *Boon*.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

July 6th, 1915.

My dear Wells,

I was given yesterday at a club your volume "Boon, etc.," from a loose leaf in which I learn that you kindly sent it me and which yet appears to have lurked there for a considerable time undelivered. I have just been reading, to acknowledge it intelligently, a considerable number of its pages—though not all; for, to be perfectly frank, I have been in that respect beaten for the first time—or rather for the first time but one—by a book of yours; I haven't found the current of it draw me on and on this time—as, unfailingly and irresistibly, before (which I have repeatedly let you know.) However, I shall try again—I hate to lose any scrap of you that *may* make for light or pleasure; and meanwhile I have more or less mastered your appreciation of H. J., which I have found very curious and interesting after a fashion—though it has naturally not filled me with a fond elation. It is difficult of course for a writer to put himself *fully* in the place of another writer who finds him extraordinarily futile and void, and who is moved to publish that to the world—and I think the case isn't easier when he happens to have enjoyed the other writer enormously from far back; because there has then grown up the habit of taking some common meeting-ground between them for granted, and the falling away of this

is like the collapse of a bridge which made communication possible. But I am by nature more in dread of any fool's paradise, or at least of any bad misguidedness, than in love with the idea of a security proved, and the fact that a mind as brilliant as yours *can* resolve me into such an unmitigated mistake, can't enjoy me in anything like the degree in which I like to think I may be enjoyed, makes me greatly want to fix myself, for as long as my nerves will stand it, with such a pair of eyes. I am aware of certain things I have, and not less conscious, I believe, of various others that I am simply reduced to wish I did or could have; so I try, for possible light, to enter into the feelings of a critic for whom the deficiencies so preponderate. The difficulty about that effort, however, is that one can't keep it up—one *has* to fall back on one's sense of one's good parts—one's own sense; and I at least should have to do that, I think, even if your picture were painted with a more searching brush. For I should otherwise seem to forget what it is that my poetic and my appeal to experience rest upon. They rest upon *my* measure of fulness—fulness of life and of the projection of it, which seems to you such an emptiness of both. I don't mean to say I don't wish I could do twenty things I can't—many of which you do so livingly; but I confess I ask myself what would become in that case of some of those to which I am most addicted and by which interest seems to me most beautifully producible. I hold that interest may be, *must* be, exquisitely made and created, and that if we don't make it, we who undertake to, nobody and nothing will make it for us; though nothing is more possible, nothing may even be more certain, than that my quest of it, my constant wish to run it to earth, may entail the sacrifice

of certain things that are not on the straight line of it. However, there are too many things to say, and I don't think your chapter is really inquiring enough to entitle you to expect all of them. The fine thing about the fictional form to me is that it opens such widely different windows of attention; but that is just why I like the window so to frame the play and the process!

Faithfully yours,

HENRY JAMES.

*To H. G. Wells.*

With reference to the following letter, Mr. Wells kindly allows me to quote a passage from his answer, dated July 8, 1915, to the preceding: "... There is of course a real and very fundamental difference in our innate and developed attitudes towards life and literature. To you literature like painting is an end, to me literature like architecture is a means, it has a use. Your view was, I felt, altogether too prominent in the world of criticism and I assailed it in lines of harsh antagonism. And writing that stuff about you was the first escape I had from the obsession of this war. *Boon* is just a waste-paper basket. Some of it was written before I left my home at Sandgate (1911), and it was while I was turning over some old papers that I came upon it, found it expressive, and went on with it last December. I had rather be called a journalist than an artist, that is the essence of it, and there was no other antagonist possible than yourself. But since it was printed I have regretted a hundred times that I did not express our profound and incurable difference and contrast with a better grace. . . ." In a further letter to Henry James, dated July 13, Mr. Wells adds: "I don't clearly understand your concluding phrases—which shews no doubt how completely they define our difference. When you say 'it is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance,' I can only read sense into it by assuming that you are using 'art' for every conscious human activity. I use the word for a research and attainment that is technical and special. . . ."

*Dictated.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
July 10th, 1915.

My dear Wells,

I am bound to tell you that I don't think your letter makes out any sort of case for the bad manners of "Boon," as far as your indulgence in them at the expense of your poor old H. J. is concerned—I say "your" simply because he has *been* yours, in the most liberal, continual, sacrificial, the most admiring and abounding critical way, ever since he began to know your writings: as to which you have had copious testimony. Your comparison of the book to a waste-basket strikes me as the reverse of felicitous, for what one throws into that receptacle is exactly what one doesn't commit to publicity and make the affirmation of one's estimate of one's contemporaries by. I should liken it much rather to the preservative portfolio or drawer in which what is withheld from the basket is savingly laid away. Nor do I feel it anywhere evident that my "view of life and literature," or what you impute to me as such, is carrying everything before it and becoming a public menace—so unaware do I seem, on the contrary, that my products constitute an example in any measurable degree followed or a cause in any degree successfully pleaded: I can't but think that if this were the case I should find it somewhat attested in their circulation—which, alas, I have reached a very advanced age in the entirely defeated hope of. But I *have* no view of life and literature, I maintain, other than that our form of the latter in especial is admirable exactly by its range and variety, its plasticity and liberality, its fairly living on the sincere and shifting experi-

ence of the individual practitioner. That is why I have always so admired your so free and strong application of it, the particular rich receptacle of intelligences and impressions emptied out with an energy of its own, that your genius constitutes; and *that* is in particular why, in my letter of two or three days since, I pronounced it curious and interesting that you should find the case I constitute myself only ridiculous and vacuous to the extent of your having to proclaim your sense of it. The curiosity and the interest, however, in this latter connection are of course for my mind those of the break of perception (perception of the veracity of *my* variety) on the part of a talent so generally inquiring and apprehensive as yours. Of course for myself I live, live intensely and am fed by life, and my value, whatever it be, is in my own kind of expression of that. Therefore I am pulled up to wonder by the fact that for you my kind (my sort of sense of expression and sort of sense of life alike) doesn't exist; and that wonder is, I admit, a disconcerting comment on my idea of the various appreciability of our addiction to the novel and of all the personal and intellectual history, sympathy and curiosity, behind the given example of it. It is when that history and curiosity have been determined in the way most different from my own that I want to get at them—precisely *for* the extension of life, which is the novel's best gift. But that is another matter. Meanwhile I absolutely dissent from the claim that there are any differences whatever in the amenability to art of forms of literature aesthetically determined, and hold your distinction between a form that is (like) painting and a form that is (like) architecture for wholly null and void. There is no sense in which architecture is aesthetically "for use" that doesn't leave any

other art whatever exactly as much so; and so far from that of literature being irrelevant to the literary report upon life, and to its being made as interesting as possible, I regard it as relevant in a degree that leaves everything else behind. It is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance, for our consideration and application of these things, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process. If I were Boon I should say that any pretence of such a substitute is helpless and hopeless humbug; but I wouldn't be Boon for the world, and am only yours faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Henry James, junior.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
July 20th, 1915.

Dearest Harry,

How can I sufficiently tell you how moved to gratitude and appreciation I am by your good letter of July 9th, just received, and the ready understanding and sympathy expressed in which are such a blessing to me! I did proceed, after writing to you, in the sense I then explained—the impulse and the current were simply irresistible; and the business has so happily developed that I this morning received, with your letter, the kindest possible one from the Home Secretary, Sir John Simon, I mean in the personal and private way, telling me that he has just decreed the issue of my certificate of Naturalisation, which will at once take effect. It will have thus been beautifully expedited, have “gone through” in five or six days from the time my papers were sent in,

instead of in the usual month or two. He gives me his blessing on the matter, and all is well. It will probably interest you to know that the indispensability of my step to myself has done nothing but grow since I made my application; like Martin Luther at Wittenberg "I could no other," and the relief of feeling corrected an essential falsity in my position (as determined by the War and what has happened since, also more particularly what has *not* happened) is greater than I can say. I have testified to my long attachment here in the only way I could—though I certainly shouldn't have done it, under the inspiration of our Cause, if the U.S.A. had done it a little more *for* me. Then I should have thrown myself back on that and been content with it; but as this, at the end of a year, hasn't taken place, I have had to act for myself, and I go so far as quite to think, I hope not fatuously, that I shall have set an example and shown a little something of the way. But enough—there it is! . . .

Ever your affectionate old British Uncle,  
HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
July 26th, 1915.

My dear Gosse,

Your good letter makes me feel that you will be interested to know that since 4.30 this afternoon I have been able to say *Civis Britannicus sum!* My Certificate of Naturalisation was received by my Solicitor this a.m., and a few hours ago I took the Oath of Allegiance, in his office, before a Commissioner. The odd

thing is that nothing seems to have happened and that I don't feel a bit different; so that I see not at all how associated I have become, but that I was really too associated before for any nominal change to matter. The process has only shown me what I virtually *was*—so that it's rather disappointing in respect to acute sensation. I *haven't* any, I blush to confess! . . .

I thank you enormously for your confidential passage, which is most interesting and heartening. . . . And let me mention in exchange for your confidence that a friend told me this afternoon that he had been within a few days talking with —, one of the American naval attachés, whose competence he ranks high and to whom he had put some question relative to the naval sense of the condition of these islands. To which the reply had been: "You may take it from me that England is absolutely impregnable and invincible"—and — repeated over—"impregnable and invincible!" Which kind of did me good.

Let me come up and sit on your terrace some near August afternoon—I can always be rung up, you know: I *like* it—and believe me yours and your wife's all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To John S. Sargent.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
July 30th, 1915.

My dear John,

I am delighted to hear from you that you are writing and sending to Mrs. Wharton in the good sense you mention. It will give her the greatest pleasure and count enormously for her undertaking.



Yes, I daresay many Americans *will* be shocked at my "step"; so many of them appear in these days to be shocked at everything that is not a reiterated blandishment and slobberation of Germany, with recalls of ancient "amity" and that sort of thing, by our Government. I waited long months, watch in hand, for the latter to show some sign of intermitting these amiabilities to such an enemy—the very smallest would have sufficed for me to throw myself back upon it. But it seemed never to come, and the misrepresentation of *my* attitude becoming at last to me a thing no longer to be borne, I took action myself. It would really have been *so* easy for the U.S. to have "kept" (if they had cared to!) yours all faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Wilfred Sheridan.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
Aug. 7th, 1915.

Dearest Wilfred,

I have a brave letter from you which is too many days old—and the reason of that is that I became some fortnight ago a British subject. You may perhaps not have been aware that I wasn't one—it showed, I believe, so little; but I had in fact to do things, of no great elaboration, to take on the character and testify to my fond passion for the cause for which you are making so very much grander still a demonstration; so that now at any rate *civis Britannicus sum*, and there's no mistake about it. Well, the point is that this absolutely natural and inevitable offer of my allegiance—a poor thing but my own—and the amiable acceptance of

it by the powers to which I applied, have drawn down on my devoted head an avalanche of letters, the friendliest and most welcoming, beneath which I still lie gasping. They have unspeakably touched and justified me, but I brush them all aside to-night, few of them as I have in proportion been able yet to answer, in order to tell you that their effect upon me all together isn't a patch on the pride and pleasure I have in hearing from *you*, and that I find your ability to write to me, and your sweet care to do so, in your fantastic conditions, the most wonderful and beautiful thing that has ever happened. Dear and delightful to me is the gallant good humour of your letter, which makes me take what you tell me as if I were quite monstrously near you. One doesn't know what to say or do in presence of the general and particular Irish perversity and unspeakability (as your vivid page reflects it;) that is, rather, nobody knows, to any good effect, but yourself—it makes *me* so often ask if it isn't, when all's said and done and it has extorted the tribute of our grin, much more trouble than it's worth, or ever can be, and in short too, quite *too*, finally damning and discouraging. However, I am willing it should display its grace while you are there to give them, roundabout you, your exquisite care, and I can fall back on my sense of your rare psychologic intelligence. Your "Do write to me" goes to my heart, and your "I don't think the Russian affair as bad as it seems" goes to my head—even if it *now* be seeming pretty bad to us here. But there's comfort in its having apparently cost the enemy, damn his soul to hell, enormously, and still being able to do so and to keep on leaving him not at all at his ease. I believe in that vast sturdy people *quand même*—though heaven save us all from cheap optimism. I scarce know what to say

to you about things "here," unless it be that I hold we are not really in the least such fools as we mostly seem bent on appearing to the world, and that on the day when we cease giving the most fantastic account of ourselves possible by tongue and pen, on *that* day there will be fairly something the matter with us and we shall be false to our remarkably queer genius. Our genius is, and ever has been, to insist *urbi et orbi* that we live by muddle, and by muddle only—while, all the while, our native character is never *really* abjuring its stoutness or its capacity for action. We have been stout from the most ancient days, and are not a bit less so than ever—only we should do better if we didn't give so much time to writing to the papers that we are impossible and inexcusable. That is, or seems to be, queerly connected with our genius for being *at all*—so that at times I hope I shall never see it foregone: it's the mantle over which the country truly forges its confidence and acts out its faith. But the night wanes and the small hours are literally upon me—their smallness even diminishes. I am sticking to town, as you see—I find I don't yearn to eat my heart out, so to speak, all alone in the Sussex sequestration. So I keep lending my little house at Rye to friends and finding company in the mild hum of water-side Chelsea. The hum of London is mild altogether, and the drop of the profane life absolute—for I don't call the ceaseless and ubiquitous military footfall (not football!) profane, and all this quarter of the town simply bristles with soldiers and for the most part extremely good-looking ones. I really think we must be roping them in in much greater numbers than we allow when we write to the Times—otherwise I don't know what we mean by so many. Goodnight, my dear, dear boy. I hope

you have harmonious news of Clare—her father has just welcomed me in the most genial way to the national fold. I haven't lately written to her, because in the conditions I have absolutely nothing to say to her but that I feel her to be in perfection the warrior's bride—and she knows that.

Yours and hers, dearest Wilfred, all devotedly,

HENRY JAMES.

*To Edmund Gosse.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
August 25th, 1915.

My dear Gosse,

I have had a bad sick week, mostly in bed—with putting pen to paper quite out of my power: otherwise I should sooner have thanked you for the so generous spirit of that letter, and told you, with emotion, how much it has touched me. I am really more overcome than I can say by your having been able to indulge in such freedom of mind and grace of speculation, during these dark days, on behalf of my poor old rather truncated edition, in fact entirely frustrated one—which has the grotesque likeness for me of a sort of miniature Ozymandias of Egypt (“look on my *works*, ye mighty, and despair!”)—round which the lone and level sands stretch further away than ever. It *is* indeed consenting to be waved aside a little into what was once blest literature to so much as answer the question you are so handsomely impelled to make—but my very statement about the matter can only be, alas, a melancholy, a blighted confusion. That Edition has been, from the point of view

of profit either to the publishers or to myself, practically a complete failure; vaguely speaking, it doesn't sell—that is, my annual report of what it does—the whole 24 vols.—in this country amounts to about £25 from the Macmillans; and the ditto from the Scribners in the U.S. to very little more. I am past all praying for anywhere; I remain at my age (which you know,) and after my long career, utterly, insurmountably, unsaleable. And the original preparation of that collective and selective series involved really the extremity of labour—all my “earlier” things—of which the Bostonians would have been, if included, one—were so intimately and interestingly revised. The edition is from that point of view really a monument (like Ozymandias) which has never had the least intelligent critical justice done it—or any sort of critical attention at all paid it—and the artistic problem involved in my scheme was a deep and exquisite one, and moreover was, as I held, very effectively solved. Only it took such time—and such taste—in other words such aesthetic light. No more commercially thankless job of the literary order was (Prefaces and all—*they* of a thanklessness!) accordingly ever achieved. The immediate inclusion of the Bostonians was rather deprecated by the publishers (the Scribners, who were very generally and in a high degree appreciative: I make no complaint of them at all!)—and there were reasons for which I also wanted to wait: we always meant that that work should eventually come in. Revision of it loomed peculiarly formidable and time-consuming (for intrinsic reasons,) and as other things were more pressing and more promptly feasible I allowed it to stand over—with the best intentions, and also in company with a small number more of provisional omis-

sions. But by the time it *had* stood over, disappointment had set in; the undertaking had begun to announce itself as a virtual failure, and we stopped short where we were—that is when a couple of dozen volumes were out. From that moment, some seven or eight years ago, nothing whatever has been added to the series—and there is little enough appearance now that there will ever. Your good impression of the Bostonians greatly moves me—the thing was no success whatever on publication in the *Century* (where it came out,) and the late R. W. Gilder, of that periodical, wrote me at the time that they had never published anything that appeared so little to interest their readers. I felt about it myself then that it was probably rather a remarkable feat of objectivity—but I never was very thoroughly happy about it, and seem to recall that I found the subject and the material, after I had got launched in it, under some illusion, less interesting and repaying than I had assumed it to be. All the same I *should* have liked to review it for the Edition—it would have come out a much truer and more curious thing (it was meant to be curious from the first;) but there can be no question of that, or of the proportionate Preface to have been written with it, at present—or probably ever within my span of life. Apropos of which matters I at this moment hear from Heinemann that four or five of my books that he has have quite (entirely) ceased to sell and that he must break up the plates. Of course he must; I have nothing to say against it; and the things in question are mostly all in the Edition. But such is “success”! I should have liked to write that Preface to the Bostonians—which will never be written now. But think of noting now that *that* is a thing that has perished!

I am doing my best to feel better, and hope to go out this afternoon the first for several! I am exceedingly with you all over Philip's transfer to France. We are with each other now as not yet before over everything and I am yours and your wife's more than ever,

H. J.

*To Mrs. Wilfred Sheridan.*

Lieut. Wilfred Sheridan, Rifle Brigade, fell in action at Loos, September 25, 1915.

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.  
October 4th, 1915.

Dearest, dearest Clare,

I have heard twice from your kindest of Fathers, and yet this goes to you (for poor baffling personal reasons) with a dreadful belatedness. The thought of coming into your presence, and into Mrs. Sheridan's, with such wretched empty and helpless hands is in itself paralysing; and yet, even as I say that, the sense of how my whole soul is full, even to its being racked and torn, of Wilfred's belovedest image and the splendour and devotion in which he is all radiantly wrapped and enshrined, [makes me] ask myself if I don't really bring you something, of a sort, in thus giving you the assurance of how absolutely I adored him! Yet who can give you anything that approaches your incomparable sense that he was yours, and you his, to the last possessed and possessing radiance of him? I can't pretend to utter to you words of "consolation"—vainest of dreams: for what is your suffering but the measure of his virtue, his charm and his beauty?—everything we so loved him for. But I see you marked with his glory too,

and so intimately associated with his noble legend, with the light of it about you, and about his children, always, and the precious privilege of making him live again whenever one approaches you; convinced as I am that you will rise, in spite of the unspeakable laceration, to the greatness of all this and feel it carry you in a state of sublime privilege. I had sight and some sound of him during an hour of that last leave, just before he went off again; and what he made me then feel, and what his face seemed to say, amid that cluster of relatives in which I was the sole outsider (of which too I was extraordinarily proud,) is beyond all expression. I don't know why I presume to say such things—I mean poor things only of *mine*, to you, all stricken and shaken as you are—and then again I know how any touch of his noble humanity must be unspeakably dear to you, and that you'll go on getting the fragrance of them wherever he passed. I think with unutterable tenderness of those days of late last autumn when you were in the little house off the Edgware Road, and the humour and gaiety and vivid sympathy of his talk (about his then beginnings and conditions) made me hang spellbound on his lips. But what memories are these not to you, and how can one speak to you at all without stirring up the deeps? Well, we are all in them *with* you, and with his mother—and may I speak of his father?—and with his children, and we cling to you and cherish you as never before. I live with you in thought every step of the long way, and am yours, dearest Clare, all devotedly and sharingly,

HENRY JAMES.



*To Hugh Walpole.*

21 Carlyle Mansions,  
Cheyne Walk, S.W.

Nov. 13th, 1915.

. . . I take to my heart these blest Cornish words from you and thank you for them as articulately as my poor old impaired state permits. It will be an immense thing to see you when your own conditions permit of it, and in that fond vision I hang on. I have been having a regular hell of a summer and autumn (that is more particularly from the end of July :) through the effect of a bad—an aggravated—heart-crisis, during the first weeks of which I lost valuable time by attributing (under wrong advice) my condition to mistaken causes; but I am in the best hands now and apparently responding very well to very helpful treatment. But the past year has made me feel twenty years older, and, frankly, as if my knell had rung. Still, I cultivate, I at least attempt, a brazen front. I shall not let that mask drop till I have heard *your* thrilling story. Do intensely believe that I respond clutchingly to your every grasp of me, every touch, and would so gratefully be a re-connecting link with you here—where I don't wonder that you're bewildered. (It will be indeed, as far as I am concerned, the bewildered leading the bewildered.) I have "seen" very few people—I see as few as possible, I can't stand them, and all their promiscuous prattle, mostly; so that those who have reported of me to you must have been peculiarly vociferous. I deplore with all my heart your plague of boils and of insomnia; I haven't known the former, but the latter, alas, is my own

actual portion. I think I shall know your rattle of the telephone as soon as ever I shall hear it. Heaven speed it, dearest Hugh, and keep me all fondestly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

## INDEX

- Abbey, Edwin, i. 88, 238 ; ii. 92, 193.
- Adams, Henry, letters to, i. 438 ; ii. 373.
- Aïdé, Hamilton, ii. 60.
- Ainger, Canon, i. 180.
- Alexander, Sir George, i. 149.
- Allen, Miss Jessie, letters to, i. 387 ; ii. 164.
- Ambassadors, The*, i. 280, 362, 383-5, 421 ; ii. 10, 253, 345.
- American, The*, i. 47, 333 ; ii. 345. (dramatic version) i. 148, 163, 169, 175-7, 180, 185, 189 ; ii. 366.
- American Scene, The*, ii. 4, 37, 46, 86.
- Andersen, Hendrik, ii. 76.
- Anderson, Miss Mary, *see* Navarro, Mrs. A. F. de.
- Archer, William, i. 175, 179, 234.
- Arnold, Matthew, i. 125.
- Aspern Papers, The*, i. 87.
- Asquith, Right Hon. H. H., ii. 477, 497, 498.
- Awkward Age, The*, i. 280, 300, 325, 327, 333, 341, 342 ; ii. 250.
- Bailey, John, letter to, ii. 279.
- Balestier, Wolcott, i. 150, 170, 190, 193.
- Balfour, Right Hon. A. J., ii. 50.
- Balfour, Graham, i. 394.
- Balzac, i. 335 ; ii. 263, 363.
- Barnard, Frederick, i. 88.
- Barrès, Maurice, i. 227, 277.
- Bartholomew, A. T. ii. 131.
- Beardsley, Aubrey, ii. 355.
- Bell, Mrs. Hugh (Lady Bell), letters to, i. 176 ; ii. 239.
- Bennett, Arnold, ii. 270.
- Benson, Archbishop, i. 285.
- Benson, Arthur C., i. 223 ; ii. 64, 115, 116, 127. Letters to, i. 247, 259, 269, 285 ; ii. 129, 377.
- Bernstein, Henry, ii. 331, 332, 370.
- Berry, Walter V. R., ii. 308, 441. Letter to, ii. 225.
- Better Sort, The*, i. 280.
- Bigelow, Mrs., letters to, ii. 166, 288.
- Biltmore, ii. 26.
- Björnson, i. 226.
- Blanche, Jacques, ii. 111, 112.
- Blandy, Mary, ii. 369, 385.
- Blocqueville, Madame de, i. 46.
- Blowitz, i. 157.
- Boit, Edward, ii. 77.
- Bonn, i. 5.
- Bonnard, Abel, ii. 370.
- Boott, Frank, i. 57, 98.
- Bosanquet, Miss T., letter to, ii. 212.
- Bostonians, The*, i. 86, 115, 122, 136, 333 ; ii. 101, 516.
- Boulogne-sur-mer, i. 5 ; ii. 387.
- Bourget, Paul, i. 151, 156, 192, 199, 206, 211, 225, 226, 254, 281, 324 ; ii. 57. Letter to, i. 293.

- Bourget, Paul, Madame, letters to, i. 300, 418.
- Boutroux, Emile, ii. 444.
- Braxfield, Lord Justice Clerk, ii. 385.
- Bridges, Robert, ii. 158, 349.  
Letter to, ii. 353.
- Bright, John, i. 76.
- Brighton, ii. 62.
- Broadway, i. 88.
- Brooke, Rupert, ii. 131, 395, 479-82, 485, 489-92.
- Brooks, Cunliffe, i. 63.
- Broughton, Miss Rhoda, ii. 13, 60, 77, 343. Letters to, ii. 185, 247, 329, 403, 423.
- Browne, Denis, ii. 491.
- Browning, Robert, i. 7; ii. 243.
- Browning, Robert Barrett, i. 171.
- Bryce, Viscount, ii. 395.
- Bryn Mawr, ii. 3, 28, 54.
- Burne-Jones, Sir Edward, i. 126, 201, 314-17, 347, 348.
- Burton, Sir Richard, ii. 265.
- Cadwalader, John, ii. 85, 200.
- California, ii. 34.
- Cambon, Paul, i. 144.
- Cannan, Gilbert, ii. 335.
- Carlyle, Thomas, i. 122-4.
- Caro, E. M., i. 46.
- Chamberlain, Joseph, ii. 12.
- Chapman, R. W., letter to, ii. 250.
- Charmes, Xavier, i. 144.
- Charteris, Hon. Evan, letters to, ii. 452, 470.
- Chicago, ii. 32.
- Childe, Edward Lee, i. 50. Letters to, ii. 10, 124.
- Chocorua (New Hampshire), ii. 2, 18, 139, 172.
- Clark, Sir John, i. 62.
- Clifford, Mrs. W. K., letters to, i. 389; ii. 18, 29, 133, 178, 243, 407, 412.
- Colvin, Lady, *see* Sitwell, Mrs.
- Colvin, Sir Sidney, i. 111, 134, 158, 162, 180, 193, 195, 209, 229; ii. 288.  
Letters to i. 230, 243, 338.
- Compton, Edward, i. 148, 169, 170, 175-7; ii. 366.
- Confidence*, i. 43, 69.
- Conrad, Joseph, i. 398, 413.
- Coppée, F., i. 156.
- Cory, William, i. 269.
- Cotes, Mrs. Everard, letter to, i. 354.
- Covering End*, i. 305, 306; ii. 6.
- Crapy Cornelia*, ii. 144.
- Crawford, Marion, i. 282, 327.
- Creighton, Bishop, ii. 285.
- Crewe, Marquis of, *see* Houghton, Lord.
- Curtis, George, i. 201.
- Curtis, Mrs. Daniel, i. 87, 127, 169, 171, 386; ii. 78.
- Daisy Miller*, i. 43, 65, 68, 92.
- Darwin, W. E., ii. 427.
- Darwin, Mrs. W. E., i. 264.
- Daudet, Alphonse, i. 41, 103, 105, 156, 247, 248, 255, 276; ii. 263. Letter to, i. 108.
- Death of the Lion, The*, i. 222.
- De Vere, Aubrey, i. 17.
- Dew-Smith, Mrs., letter to, ii. 56.
- Dickens, Charles, ii. 41, 143.
- Dickens, Miss, i. 16.
- Dino, Duchesse de, ii. 125.
- Dolben, Digby Mackworth, ii. 349-51, 353-5.
- Dostoevsky, ii. 245.
- Doré, Gustave, i. 45.
- Dresden, i. 150, 190.
- Dublin Castle, i. 245-6.
- Dublin, Royal Hospital, i. 245.
- Du Breuil, Jean, ii. 473, 482.
- Du Maurier, George, i. 144, 180. Letters to, i. 98, 218.
- Dumas, Alexandre, ii. 425.

- Edwards, Miss M. Betham, letter to, ii. 221.
- Eliot, George, i. 42, 51, 61, 66 ; ii. 41, 295.
- Elliott, Miss Gertrude (Lady Forbes-Robertson), ii. 98.
- Emerson, R. W., i. 430 ; ii. 301.
- Emmet, Miss Ellen (Mrs. Blanchard Rand), letters to, ii. 110, 196.
- English Hours*, ii. 104.
- Esher, Viscount, ii. 201.
- Etretat, i. 42 ; ii. 266.
- Europeans, The*, i. 43, 65.
- Fawcett, E., i. 292.
- Fezandié, Institution (Paris), i. 4.
- Finer Grain, The*, ii. 144, 302.
- Filippi, Filippo, ii. 77, 82.
- FitzGerald, Edward, i. 267.
- Flaubert, Gustave, i. 41, 42, 46, 49 ; ii. 265, 267.
- Florence, i. 21, 24, 35, 57, 128.
- Florida, ii. 26, 31.
- Forbes-Robertson, Sir J., ii. 6, 99.
- Fox, Lazarus, i. 15.
- France, Anatole, i. 206 ; ii. 287.
- Fullerton, W. Morton, ii. 162.
- Galton, Sir Douglas, i. 180.
- Gardner, Mrs. John L., i. 350 ; ii. 17. Letters to, i. 92, 244 ; ii. 203.
- Gautier, Théophile, i. 46 ; ii. 426.
- Gay, Walter, ii. 430.
- Geneva, i. 141, 142.
- Gilder, R. W., ii. 516.
- Gilder, Mrs. R. W., letter to, ii. 416.
- Gissing, George, i. 398.
- Gladstone, W. E., i. 53, 96 ; ii. 11.
- Glehn, Wilfred von, ii. 241.
- Godkin, E. L., i. 293, 385.
- Golden Bowl, The*, i. 280 ; ii. 10, 15, 29, 31, 42, 44, 216, 345.
- Golden Dream, The*, i. 337.
- Goncourt Academy, the, ii. 63.
- Goncourt, Edmond de, i. 41, 103, 105, 157, 255 ; ii. 270.
- Gordon, Lady Hamilton, i. 62.
- Gosse, Edmund, i. 140, 150, 258, 370 ; ii. 87. Reminiscences by, i. 88. Letters to, i. 130, 175, 189, 207, 223, 226, 227, 228, 253, 340, 352, 386, 393 ; ii. 19, 24, 255, 257, 259, 261, 264, 266, 284, 361, 425, 446, 497, 509, 514.
- Gosse, Mrs. Edmund, letter to, i. 206.
- Grainger, Percy, ii. 241.
- Greville, Mrs., i. 66, 71, 80.
- Groombridge Place, i. 372.
- Grove, Mrs. Archibald, letter to, ii. 336.
- Guy Domville*, i. 149, 152, 216, 231-5, 239-42.
- Haggard, Rider, i. 158.
- Haldane, Viscount, ii. 444.
- Hardy, Thomas, i. 194, 204 ; ii. 111.
- Harland, Henry, i. 208, 222.
- Harrison, Frederic, ii. 211, 413. Letter to, ii. 501.
- Harrison, Mrs. Frederic, letter to, ii. 210.
- Harvard, ii. 21, 158, 195.
- Harvey, Sir Paul, ii. 96, 126. Letter to, ii. 48.
- Hawthorne* (English Men of Letters Series), i. 71, 72.
- Hay, John, i. 271, 415 ; ii. 26.
- Heidelberg, i. 32.
- Henley, W. E., i. 393, 394.
- Hennessy, Mrs. Richard, ii. 140.
- Henschel, Sir George, letter to, i. 236.
- Hewlett, Maurice, i. 353.
- High Bid, The*, ii. 6, 93, 97, 99.
- Holland, Sidney, i. 63.
- Holmes, Wendell, i. 251, 302.
- Hosmer, B. G., i. 18.
- Houghton, Lord, i. 52, 53.

- Houghton, Lord (Marquis of Crewe), i. 245.
- Howells, W. D., i. 10, 14, 30, 60, 275. Letters to, i. 33, 47, 71, 103, 135, 166, 202, 236, 284, 298, 357, 362, 383, 405, 415, 421; ii. 8, 101, 122, 229.
- Hueffer, Mrs. F. M., *see* Hunt, Miss Violet.
- Hugo, Victor, i. 46.
- Humières, Vicomte Robert d', ii. 80.
- Hunt, Miss Violet (Mrs. F. M. Hueffer), letter to, i. 432.
- Hunt, William, i. 5, 7.
- Hunter, Mrs. Charles, ii. 157, 202, 203, 216, 241, 332. Letter to, ii. 176.
- Hunter, Mrs. George, letter to, i. 265.
- Huntington, Mrs., i. 23.
- Huntly, Marquis of, i. 62, 63.
- Huxley, T. H., i. 52.
- Ibsen, i. 217.
- International Episode, An*, i. 65, 67.
- Ireland, i. 122, 155, 222.
- Italy, i. 37, 107, 127; ii. 82, 455-7.
- Ivory Tower, The*, ii. 101, 159, 394.
- James, George Abbot, ii. 198, 204. Letters to, ii. 114, 116.
- James, Henry: character and methods of work, i. xiii-xxxi: birth and early years, i. 1-11: early visits to Europe, ii. 11-14: settles in Europe, i. 41: life in London, i. 42-4, 84, 85, 87: settles at Lamb House, Rye, i. 153, 279-81: revisits America, i. 283; ii. 1-4: last visit to America, ii. 157, 158: settles in Chelsea, ii. 159: seventieth birthday, ii. 159, 318-20, 321-4: naturalised as a British subject, ii. 395, 495-9, 508-10: last illness and death, ii. 395: dramatic work, i. 146, 164, 165, 169-71, 183-6, 212, 241; ii. 6: collected edition of his fiction, ii. 4, 71, 98, 101-3, 515, 516: impressions of England and the English, i. 22, 23, 26, 27, 31, 42, 55, 58, 64, 68, 69, 74, 84, 85, 87, 96, 114, 125; ii. 390, 432, 435, 459.
- James, Henry, senior, i. 1-3, 9, 27, 83, 97, 98, 111. Letters to, i. 28, 32, 45.
- James, Mrs. Henry, senior (Miss Mary Walsh), i. 2, 82, 92; ii. 48. Letters to, i. 19, 21, 32, 38, 67, 76.
- James, Henry, junior, letters to, i. 317; ii. 16, 98, 248, 299, 357, 399, 435, 494, 508.
- James, Miss Alice, i. 1, 13, 84, 86, 112, 120, 141, 144, 150, 151, 191, 193, 219-22. Letters to, i. 15, 62, 169.
- James, Miss Margaret (Mrs. Bruce Porter), letters to, ii. 37, 54.
- James, Robertson, i. 1, 97; ii. 157, 170.
- James, Wilkinson, i. 1, 7, 9.
- James, William, i. 1-3, 5, 7, 9, 14, 42, 44, 84, 151, 282, 283, 302, 312, 346, 347, 352; ii. 157, 172-5, 311, 342, 358. Letters to, i. 24, 26, 50, 59, 65, 97, 102, 111, 115, 119, 140, 156, 173, 183, 216, 219, 233, 239, 251, 287, 323, 379, 423; ii. 35, 43, 51, 53, 84, 139, 145.
- James, Mrs. William, letters to, i. 270, 309; ii. 33, 201, 213, 310, 316, 341, 374, 465.
- James, William, junior, letters to, ii. 72, 326, 409.
- James, Mrs. William, junior, *see* Runnells, Miss Alice.

- Jersey, Countess of, letter to, i. 196.
- Jones, Mrs. Cadwalader, letters to, i. 403, 409.
- Jusserand, J. J., i. 144 ; ii. 26.
- Kemble, Mrs. Fanny, i. 67, 70, 83, 95, 129 ; ii. 153. Letter to, i. 78.
- Kempe, C. E., i. 261, 262.
- Keynes, Geoffrey, ii. 131.
- Kipling, Rudyard, i. 158, 182, 192, 193, 256, 278, 347, 349.
- Lady Barbarina*, i. 104.
- La Farge, John, i. 410.
- Lamb House, Rye, description of, i. 272-4 : fire at, i. 320-3.
- Lang, Andrew, i. 139 ; ii. 286.
- Langtry, Mrs., i. 63.
- Lapsley, Gaillard T., ii. 93, 113. Letters to, i. 292, 399 ; ii. 64, 95, 277.
- Lawrence, D. H., ii. 335.
- Leighton, Lord, i. 250.
- Lemaître, Jules, ii. 428, 484.
- Lesson of Balzac, The*, ii. 3, 28, 30.
- Lesson of the Master, The*, i. 87, 196.
- Leverett, Rev. W. C., i. 7.
- Lewes, G. H., i. 61.
- Lincoln, Abraham, ii. 360.
- Little Tour in France, A*, i. 83.
- Lodge, Mrs. Henry Cabot, letter to, ii. 463.
- London, i. 54, 59, 70, 74 ; ii. 37, 38.
- Loti, Pierre, i. 207, 208, 333, 335.
- Lowell, James Russell, i. 13, 56, 75, 115, 187, 188, 201. Letter to, i. 118.
- Lubbock, Percy, letters to, i. 398 ; ii. 321.
- Lushington, Miss, i. 54.
- Lyall, Sir Alfred, i. 180.
- Lydd, i. 370.
- Mackenzie, Compton, ii. 365. Letters to, ii. 366, 454, 492.
- Mackenzie, Miss Muir, letters to, i. 290, 381, 390.
- McKinley, President, i. 256, 387.
- Malvern, Great, i. 26, 28.
- Marble, Manton, ii. 45, 85.
- Marsh, Edward, letters to, ii. 477, 481, 485, 489, 491.
- Martin, Sir Theodore, i. 180.
- Mathew, Lady, ii. 404.
- Mathews, Mrs. Frank, letter to, i. 414.
- Maupassant, Guy de, i. 41 ; ii. 265, 267-70.
- Meilhac, i. 157.
- Mentmore, i. 76.
- Meredith, George, i. 224, 225, 248 ; ii. 258, 260, 262, 265, 455.
- Middle Years, The*, i. 1, 65 ; ii. 37, 394.
- Milan, i. 78, 123.
- Millais, Sir J. E., i. 76.
- Millet, Frank, i. 88, 322.
- Montégut, Emile de, i. 46.
- Morley, John, Viscount, i. 52, 53, 380 ; ii. 11, 260.
- Morris, William, i. 16-19, 348, 349.
- Morris, Mrs. William, i. 17, 18, 80.
- Morse, Miss Frances R., letters to, i. 262, 301.
- Munich, i. 32 ; ii. 147, 148, 252.
- Musset, Alfred de, i. 8 ; ii. 162, 163.
- Myers, F. W. H., i. 379. Letter to, i. 307.
- Naples, i. 43.
- Nauheim, ii. 168.
- Navarro, A. F. de, letters to, i. 319, 356, 372, 376 ; ii. 297.
- Navarro, Mrs. A. F. de (Miss Mary Anderson), letter to, i. 336.
- New England, ii. 20, 139.
- New Novel, The*, ii. 362.
- New York, ii. 99 ; i. 23, 25.

- Newport, i. 5-9.
- Norris, W. E., i. 224 ; ii. 247, 330.  
Letters to, i. 319, 356, 372, 376 ; ii. 12, 22, 46, 59, 86, 90, 118, 167, 180, 218.
- Norton, Charles Eliot, i. 10, 11, 15, 361 ; ii. 71, 122, 306. Letters to, i. 30, 74, 91, 122, 187, 197, 313, 345.
- Norton, Miss Elizabeth, letter to, ii. 457.
- Norton, Miss Grace, letters to, i. 35, 54, 56, 69, 93, 100, 113, 126, 275 ; ii. 68, 135, 172, 304, 427, 447.
- Norton, Richard, ii. 394, 427, 447-49.
- Notes of a Son and Brother*, i. 1 ; ii. 157, 300, 357, 373, 417.
- Notes on Novelists*, ii. 122, 158, 235, 243, 362, 425.
- Oberammergau, i. 169, 172.
- Ohnet, Georges, ii. 484.
- Ortmans, F., i. 254.
- Osbourne, Lloyd, i. 178, 187, 206.
- Osterley, i. 197.
- Other House, The*, i. 258 ; ii. 6, 133, 135.
- Outcry, The*, ii. 6, 133, 190, 210, 216, 222, 291, 302.
- Oxford, ii. 158, 195, 252.
- Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, i. 53.
- Paget, Sir James, i. 180.
- Palgrave, Miss Gwenllian, letter to, ii. 83.
- Paris, i. 41, 43, 48, 51, 57, 150, 157 ; ii. 5, 88.
- Parsons, Alfred, i. 88, 273.
- Partial Portraits*, i. 98, 110, 131.
- Passionate Pilgrim, A*, i. 12.
- Pater, Walter, i. 227, 228.
- Peabody, Miss, i. 115.
- Pell, Duncan, i. 6.
- Perry, Thomas Sergeant, reminiscences by, i. 6-9. Letters to, ii. 62, 151, 174, 380, 432, 476.
- Perry, Mrs. T. S., letters to, ii. 422, 443.
- Philadelphia, ii. 26.
- Phillips, Sir Claude, letter to, ii. 389.
- Pinker, J. B., letters to, ii. 15, 108, 499.
- Playden, i. 152.
- Pollock, Sir Frederick, i. 70.
- Porter, Bruce, letters to, ii. 66, 171, 313.
- Porter, Mrs. Bruce, *see* James, Miss Margaret.
- Portrait of a Lady, The*, i. 44, 133, 286 ; ii. 345.
- Portraits of Places*, i. 386.
- Powell, George E. J., ii. 266.
- Prévost, Marcel, i. 226.
- Primoli, Giuseppe, i. 246.
- Princess Casamassima, The*, i. 86, 136, 333 ; ii. 345.
- Procter, Mrs., i. 132.
- Prothero, George W., letter to, ii. 486.
- Prothero, Mrs. G. W., letters to, ii. 324, 344.
- Proust, Marcel, ii. 370.
- Question of our Speech, The*, ii. 3, 36.
- Quilter, Roger, ii. 241.
- Raffalovich, André, letter to, ii. 355.
- Rand, Mrs. Blanchard, *see* Emmet, Miss Ellen.
- Redesdale, Lord, ii. 258.
- Renan, Ernest, i. 8.
- Repplier, Miss Agnes, ii. 26, 28.
- Reubell, Miss Henrietta, letters to, i. 90, 231, 341 ; ii. 144.
- Reverberator, The*, i. 87.
- Rheims, ii. 420, 423, 430.
- Richmond, Bruce L., letter to, ii. 362.
- Ritchie, Lady, letter to, ii. 315.



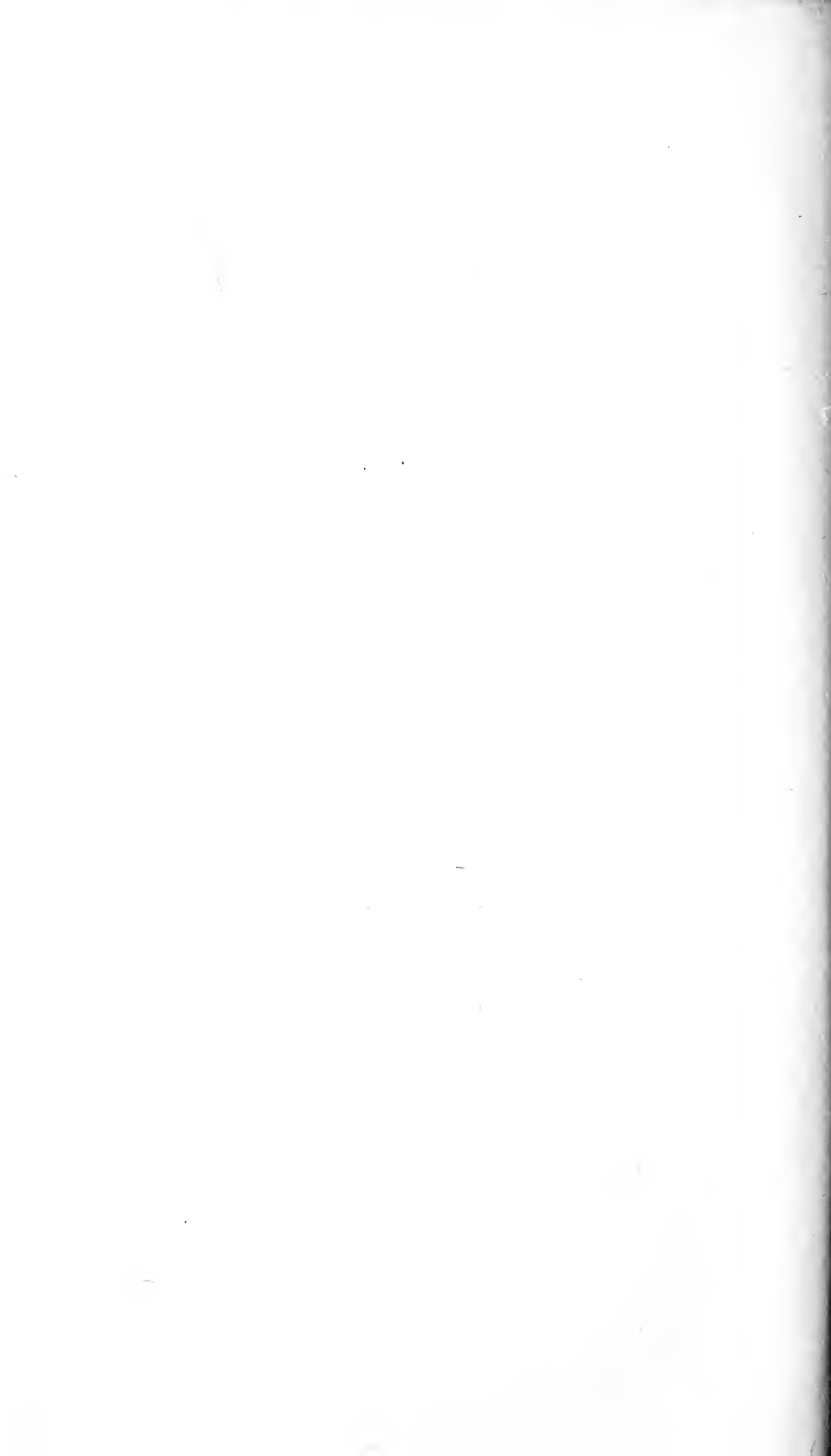
- Rochette, Institution (Geneva),  
i. 5.
- Roderick Hudson, i. 14, 41, 133 ;  
ii. 56, 345.
- Rome, i. 24, 25, 43, 57 ; ii. 76, 81,  
82, 103, 104.
- Roosevelt, President, i. 387 ; ii.  
283, 465.
- Rosebery, Earl of, i. 77.
- Rossetti, D. G., i. 18 ; ii. 306.
- Rostand, Edmond, i. 357, 376,  
377.
- Roughhead, William, letters to,  
ii. 339, 369, 384, 386.
- Runnells, Miss Alice (Mrs. William  
James, junior), letter to, ii.  
208.
- Ruskin, John, i. 7, 16, 20, 21.
- Rye, i. 152, 252, 268, 269, 271-74.
- Sacred Fount, The*, i. 280, 365,  
416.
- St. Augustine (U.S.A.), ii. 27.
- St. Gaudens, A., i. 262, 264, 267.
- San Francisco, earthquake at,  
ii. 51, 53, 66, 67.
- San Gimignano, i. 200.
- Sand, George, i. 51 ; ii. 57, 163,  
235, 236, 362, 388, 401, 426.
- Sands, Mrs. Mahlon, letter to,  
i. 190.
- Sargent, John S., i. 88, 103, 343 ;  
ii. 159, 241, 320, 327, 329,  
330, 361, 372, 379, 380, 453.  
Letter to, ii. 510.
- Saunders, T. Bailey, letters to,  
ii. 161, 194.
- Saxmundham, i. 267.
- Sayle, Charles, letter to, ii. 131.
- Schopenhauer, i. 7.
- Scott, Clement, i. 234.
- Sedgwick, Arthur, i. 30.
- Sense of the Past, The*, i. 357, 360,  
363 ; ii. 394, 441.
- Serao, Mathilde, i. 300.
- Shakespeare, William, i. 432 ;  
ii. 63, 171.
- Sheridan, Wilfred, letters to, ii.  
223, 487, 511.
- Sheridan, Mrs. Wilfred, letters to,  
ii. 206, 517.
- Siege of London, The*, ii. 123.
- Siena, i. 151, 198, 200.
- Simon, Sir John, ii. 508.
- Sitwell, Mrs. (Lady Colvin), i. 155,  
180, 205.
- Small Boy and Others, A*, i. 2 ;  
ii. 158, 213, 300, 319, 320.
- Smalley, G. W., i. 249, 250, 288.
- Smith, Goldwin, i. 52.
- Smith, Logan Pearsall, letter to,  
ii. 349.
- Smith, Miss Madeleine Hamilton,  
ii. 386, 387.
- Soft Side, The*, i. 280.
- Spencer, Herbert, i. 60, 61.
- Spoils of Poynton, The*, i. 152,  
253, 416.
- Stephen, Sir James, i. 180.
- Stephen, Sir Leslie, i. 16, 224, 277.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis, i. 86,  
121, 130, 141, 223, 225, 228-31,  
243, 244, 338-40, 394, 395 ;  
ii. 245, 384. Letters to, i. 110,  
131, 133, 138, 154, 157, 160,  
177, 185, 192, 194, 203, 209,  
213.
- Stevenson, Mrs. R. L., i. 402 ;  
ii. 67, 315.
- Story, William Wetmore, i. 13,  
282, 419, 420, 438, 439.
- Story, Mrs. Waldo, letter to, i. 419.
- Strasbourg, i. 33.
- Sturges, Jonathan, i. 312, 321,  
339, 342, 348. Letter to, i.  
256.
- Sturgis, Howard O., ii. 207, 277,  
473. Letters to, i. 325, 436 ;  
ii. 74, 76, 199, 342, 396.
- Sturgis, Julian R., letter to, i. 217.
- Sturgis, Mrs. J. R., letter to,  
ii. 14.
- Sutro, Mrs. Alfred, letters to, ii.  
331, 388, 401.
- Swedenborg, i. 3.

- Swinburne, A. C., ii. 255, 258, 265, 266, 285.
- Swynnerton, Mrs., ii. 202.
- Symonds, John Addington, i. 386.  
Letter to, i. 106.
- Syracuse (N.Y.), i. 84.
- Taine, H., ii. 234, 253.
- Talleyrand, ii. 125.
- Temple, Miss Mary, i. 26; ii. 347, 375, 417.
- Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, i. 53, 66.
- Terry, Miss Marion, i. 149, 242.
- Thackeray, W. M., ii. 40, 41.
- Theatricals*, i. 149.
- Titian, i. 21.
- Tolstoy, i. 335; ii. 246, 336.
- Tragic Muse, The*, i. 87, 138, 164, 165, 187, 333; ii. 345.
- Transatlantic Sketches*, i. 13, 14.
- Trevelyan, Sir George O., letter to, i. 440.
- Turgenev, Ivan, i. 41, 42, 45, 46, 49, 85.
- Turn of the Screw, The*, i. 285, 286, 304, 306, 307, 416.
- Vallombrosa, i. 174; ii. 77, 83.
- Vanderbilt, George, i. 263: ii. 26.
- Velvet Glove, The*, ii. 5.
- Venice, i. 87, 171; ii. 78, 79, 83.
- Vernon, Miss Anna, i. 21.
- Viardot, Madame, i. 45.
- Victoria, Queen, i. 380.
- Vincent, Mrs. Dacre, letter to, ii. 450.
- Vogüé, Vicomte Melchior de, i. 324.
- Wagnière, Madame, letters to, ii. 78, 149.
- Waldstein, Dr. Louis, letter to, i. 304.
- Walpole, Hugh, ii. 129, 130, 179.  
Letters to, ii. 115, 126, 245, 252, 333, 365, 439, 460, 519.
- Walsh, Miss Mary, *see* James, Mrs. Henry, senior.
- Walsh, Miss Katharine, i. 2, 13, 97, 145.
- War, American Civil, i. 9; ii. 416.
- War, Spanish-American, i. 287, 299.
- War, South African, i. 339, 350, 356.
- War, European, ii. 393 to end, *passim*.
- Ward, Mrs. Humphry, letters to, i. 191, 326, 328, 332; ii. 273, 275, 379.
- Warren, Edward, letters to, i. 268, 323; ii. 31.
- Warren, Sir T. Herbert, letter to, ii. 195.
- Washington, i. 91.
- Washington Square*, i. 43, 71.
- Watch and Ward*, i. 13.
- Wells, H. G., ii. 45, 258, 275.  
Letters to, i. 305, 343, 396, 408, 412; ii. 38, 142, 187, 237, 270, 345, 503, 505.
- Wharton, Mrs., i. 403, 404, 410; ii. 5, 36, 100, 121, 276, 331, 427. Letters to, ii. 57, 80, 93, 97, 107, 127, 147, 162, 168, 170, 175, 182, 205, 215, 235, 292, 370, 382, 405, 414, 419, 420, 429, 441, 468, 472, 482.
- What Maisie Knew*, i. 153, 297, 300, 333, 416.
- Wheeler, C. E., letter to, ii. 190.
- White, Dr. J. W., letters to, ii. 91, 191, 282, 371.
- White, Mrs. Henry, letters to, ii. 120, 307.
- Wilde, Oscar, i. 235, 239.
- Wilson, President, ii. 312, 459, 487.
- Wings of the Dove, The*, i. 87, 280, 407, 411, 413, 415, 416; ii. 345.

- Wister, Owen, letter to, ii. 153.  
*Within the Rim*, ii. 394, 457, 499.  
Witt, Robert C., letter to, ii. 291.  
Wolff, Alfred, i. 157.  
Wolseley, Viscount, i. 245.  
Wolseley, Viscountess, letters to,  
i. 261, 377.  
Wood, Derwent, ii. 159, 361.  
Woolson, Miss C. F., i. 106.
- Worcester, i. 28.  
Wright, C. Hagberg, letter to,  
ii. 351.  
Young, Filson, ii. 243.  
Young, Stark, ii. 344.  
Zola, Emile, i. 41, 49, 103, 105,  
162, 167, 215, 224.













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